

INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY DOINGS



DIKKEN ZWILGMEYER
Translated by EMILIE POULSSON



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INGER JOHANNE'S
LIVELY DOINGS

BOOKS BY EMILIE POULSSON

FINGER PLAYS
THROUGH THE FARMYARD GATE
CHILD STORIES AND RHYMES
THE RUNAWAY DONKEY AND OTHER RHYMES
FATHER AND BABY PLAYS
TOP-OF-THE-WORLD STORIES
WHAT HAPPENED TO INGER
JOHANNE
FOUR COUSINS
INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY
DOINGS

} *Translated from the
Norwegian of
Dikken Zwilg-
meyer.*

BY EMILIE POULSSON AND MAUD LINDSAY

THE JOYOUS TRAVELERS
THE JOYOUS GUESTS

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON



AT LAST I GOT HER INTO THE SMITHY.—Page 24.

INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY DOINGS

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DIKKEN ZWILGMEYER

by EMILIE POULSSON



Illustrated by
FLORENCE LILEY YOUNG

BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY DOINGS

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INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY DOINGS

I

CONFIDENTIAL

DEAR READERS:

It is certainly comical that I, Inger Johanne, wrote a book¹ a while ago and that it was printed, so I (I!) am an author. Really, it is too funny. I have to laugh whenever I think of it.

But what I wrote was only scribblings, not like a real author's book; for persons who know how to write can picture everything so vividly that the readers see it clearly in their own minds; and I am very sure that you can't see our delightful town at all, though my whole book is about how things are there.

¹ "What Happened to Inger Johanne."

You can't see the little red and yellow houses among the gray rocks; the shining blue water and the big ships ready to start on long voyages, with the sailors hauling up the anchors, while on the hill the wives and children stand waving big handkerchiefs and crying. They even climb Big Rock and stand there until the ship is just a little speck far, far out on the water.

Oh, you can't know, either, how the fresh wind feels on your cheeks, or how the heather brushes against the bottom of your dress, or how our old house on the hillside looks—or Peter or Karsten —— No, I wrote about it all so poorly that you can't have much idea of any of it.

Before the stories were printed I let Nils and Peter and Karsten and Massa and Mina read them, but I shouldn't have done that, for I got paid for it well and quickly, I can tell you.

Karsten thwacked me on the head hard, four times, because I had written that he was trou-

blesome. Nils thought I had said too little about him, so he squirted a lot of water right in my face.

Peter, the dean's son, was mightily offended (and has been ever since) because I told about his father leading him home by the ear. As for Massa and Mina, they thought it was so tedious to read about the children here at home that they would not even finish the stories.

So, you see, you get something besides pleasure when you write a book.

But what do you think? My book was praised in the newspapers! It really was! and I must say that that was exceedingly pleasant.

I had decided that I would never write another book, but I have changed my mind; for when people say I write "so very"—why, of course I want to write.

At one time I thought that to be head milk-maid with a large herd of cows in my care would be the most delightful thing in the world, but now I know I should rather be an author. Hurrah!

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Yes—I shout, “Hurrah!” because it has been in the newspaper that “Inger Johanne is full of talent, has humor and is hearty and sound.”

Hearty and sound am I, that is sure, for I have never had anything the matter with me except that time I broke my arm when I thought I should be a circus rider. (I told about that in the other book.)

Every time there was anything in the paper about me when my book first came out, I would take the paper and read the notices aloud to Massa, Mina, and the rest.

“Style, color, and tone are well maintained throughout Inger Johanne’s book,” I read in a loud voice. “And the whole is pervaded by humor that is irresistible.”

While reading, I usually stood on a fence or a rock, and when I finished, I swung the paper out in the air and shouted, “Hurrah!”

Naturally the others made fun of me, but I never bothered myself the least bit about that. I don’t believe you could find in our whole

town one single other person who has written a real book. True enough, Candidate Juul has made a French dictionary for schools, but that doesn't mean that he has talent, as the papers say I have.

However, when the boys and girls laugh at me too much because I talk about my book, I go away from them; but I soon come back, for there is no fun in staying alone, even if you are "full of talent."

Most people think that nothing very important happens in our town, but we girls and boys always have plenty of fun and excitement, and that is what I'm going to tell you about in a minute. But first I want to tell you about Karsten. He is exactly the same as ever, thinking of awfully queer things to do almost every day. One of his plans was quite a stroke of genius, I must say!

As I walked down-town one morning, I was surprised to see some peasants and town boys in the middle of the market-place where there is almost never anybody. And what do

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you think I found when I went to see what was going on?

There stood Karsten in the middle of the bunch. He had our smallest bread-basket with Mother's carving-knife in it, a half-stick of sealing-wax, a tooth-brush I had bought the day before, and a number of other little things from home.

“Why, Karsten! Are you crazy? What are you doing?” I called.

“I’m in business, as you can easily see,” said Karsten grandly. “Go away.”

Imagine it! That foolish child stood there in the market-place actually trying to sell a half-stick of sealing-wax and my new tooth-brush! Some of the other boys had sold postage stamps and buttons, and so of course Karsten wanted to sell something.

You may well believe that I took him home with me in a hurry; and there he got the good scolding from Father that he deserved.

I could write a much longer letter than this, but perhaps I had better not, for I have lately

read that the art of writing is to limit yourself, and so I will close at once.

Thank you for liking my book.

INGER JOHANNE.

P. S. My dears, you must be sure to praise this book a little, also, or else I shall be horribly embarrassed and mortified before Massa, Mina, and Peter, and the others.

I. J.

II

AT THE PARSONAGE

THE BOAT bumped and scraped against the wharf. We had arrived. Hurrah!

The instant Karsten set foot on the wharf, he was off and away at full speed up the hill, and swinging into the avenue that led to the Parsonage.

On my way up, I happened to think of some strawberry patches I had known the summer before, and I simply had to go a little aside on the hill to look at them. Yes, there they were, with specks of red shining out between the leaves and stones. Good!

But now I could see Aunt Magda's garden hat at the end of the avenue and I must hurry, for she would be wondering what had become of me. I began to run, and soon sprang into her open arms. I put both my arms around her and squeezed her frightfully hard till

she shrieked. I always do that with any one I like awfully well, you see.

On the Parsonage steps sat Uncle's friend, the queer old lawyer, Mr. Witt, with his mass of bristling white hair and his sharp eyes.

And now Great-Aunt came. She is aunt to Mother and Aunt Magda and is awfully old. Great-Aunt thinks she knows everything, I do believe. No matter what incredible thing happens in the town or in the world, she insists that she foresaw long ago that it would happen. "There! Didn't I know it? No need to tell me," says Great-Aunt.

Between you and me, I will own that I cannot like her; but she is frightfully clever, and Aunt Magda daren't do a thing except just what Great-Aunt wishes.

"Well," said Great-Aunt, looking me over, "seems to me you had better stop growing now. You will soon be so tall that you can look into people's second-story windows."

Great-Aunt is a good half a head taller than I, so she had better think of her own height;

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but I didn't say that. I only curtsied nicely and gave her all the proper greetings from Mother and Father.

Karsten had done nothing but run around through the rooms without greeting any one, shouting, "Where is Hedvig? Where is Dan?" Ugh! that rude Karsten! What would Mother think of his not greeting anybody, but just running around asking for the milkmaid and the dog? I must say it was decidedly necessary that I should come and behave properly. When I choose, I can behave myself charmingly, almost like a grown-up young lady. I say, "What, please?" or "I beg your pardon?" to people sometimes even when I hear perfectly what they say; and when I drink from a cup or glass I curl my little finger out in the air, for that is what I have seen fine ladies do.

Well, there I sat and drank chocolate and talked grown-up talk; and presently Karsten, warm and out of breath, came in from the kitchen.

“ My! Hedvig and Dan have grown awfully little since last summer,” said he.

“ Is that so? Has Hedvig, too, grown little? ” asked Great-Aunt.

Yes, Karsten thought she had shrunken remarkably.

Oh, that pleasant old living-room at the Parsonage! It has a low ceiling, and all the walls are crowded with pictures. There are Luther and Melancthon, and the King in Leire and Gustavus Adolphus and Wellington and Bishop Gislesen and his wife, and Skipper Marenssen from down on the shore, and William of Orange with his crown and sceptre. Uncle goes around and talks to them sometimes as if they were alive and could answer him.

There are green woven pieces over the sofas and chairs, and the windows are full of fuchsias, always in bloom. Great-Aunt and Aunt Magda sit, each on her own side of a table between the windows.

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Great-Aunt has many interesting things in her work-box, a basket carved from a cherry-stone, a corkscrew as little as a fly, and other queer things. I look at them when Great-Aunt is out. I should not dare to at any other time.

The door stood open, and summer fragrance was wafted in. Between the white rails of the garden fence, I could see bunches of currants, clear and red, and I knew that in the garden there were raspberries as big as the cook's thimble, and garden strawberries so big they had the distinction of being laid out on pieces of roof tiles to ripen. Hurrah! What a good time we should have! Suddenly I sprang up and for pure joy leaped down the steps four or five at a time to the grass below.

“See that now!” said the old lawyer still sitting on the steps. “And I had thought you a grown-up young lady!” This embarrassed me a little, but I pretended not to notice it.

The whole of the first day, I went about visiting the places and the people I had known

the year before. First, I went to the men's room to see Jon. He was poorly, he said, and had a stitch in his side a foot long. It was a great deal worse because he had had to row out to the steamer for us,—which he needn't have done if children only stayed in their own homes as was proper, he thought. He was not so very polite,—he usually isn't—but I never trouble myself in the least about that.

“Oh, you'll be all right soon, Jon,” I said.

“Humph! It would be pretty bad for other folk if I weren't,” said Jon, looking much offended.

Later I was in the henhouse and saw a hen sitting on her nest, and in the pig-pen where I scratched a pig's back with a stick. “Piggy, piggy, piggy!” “Uf, uf, uf,” said the pig. Then I went to the cow-house and the barn, and last of all to the churchyard,—the church is right near the Parsonage, you see,—where I went around and read all the verses on the gravestones, although I knew most of them by heart.

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It is an awfully pleasant churchyard, with big, plump maple-trees, through which the sunlight falls in flecks and patches on the tall grass and sunken graves, where the old sailors and their wives lie buried. Some have beautiful gravestones with verses on them which Uncle wrote. Round the churchyard is a very broad stone wall. Karsten and I get up on it and play tag there.

At the very farthest end of the Parsonage garden I play, all by myself, a most delightful kind of play. I am awfully fond of cows and sheep and everything about a farm. That is why I used to think I would be a milkmaid, you see, but, as I told you, I have given up that idea. I prefer to be an author.

Well, far down in the garden where nobody ever comes, under some old gooseberry-bushes, I have lots of cattle,—cows and calves and sheep and lambs! The cows are big round smooth stones; they stand in their stalls with fresh green grass before them; the calves—smaller round stones,—stand in calf-pens.

Everything is nicely arranged, I assure you. The sheep and lambs are pretty white stones that I find on the shore.

Near my barns I have built a little bit of a hut of moss and stone with a tiny piece of glass in it for a window. Inside the hut there are two dolls,—the milkmaids who take care of the cows. Oh, I love all such planning and arranging and pretending!

But when I happened to speak of it one day, that horrid old lawyer began to make fun of me because I at my age could find pleasure in such make-believe things. And somehow after that, I began to be tired of my cattle farm under the gooseberry-bushes. It would be a different matter if one could have a real cow to take care of.

In the south meadow that summer there was a big brown-and-white cow named Brownie. She was so quarrelsome that she could not be with the other cows. Great-Aunt told Karsten and me to lock out for ourselves when near her, because she was very cross. But I used

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to go often to look at her, and soon I had a tremendous desire that Brownie should be *my* cow, as it were, and that I should take the entire care of her myself.

One day I decided that I would put Brownie in the old smithy that no one used any more; and there I would feed her and milk her every day. But first I must have a collar for her; so I went to the cow-house, where I found an old one. It was firmly fastened in a stall, but I jiggled and twisted and jerked and tugged at it until I finally got it out. Then I hammered it into the wall of the smithy. The next thing was to get Brownie into her new quarters.

The first time I went near her she gave me such a forcible push in my chest that I fell right over. However, I don't give up very easily, and I coaxed and pushed and pulled at Brownie so long that at last I got her into the smithy and the collar on her neck. Hurrah! Now I had a cow-house and a cow with a collar on, just for myself alone. What fun!

I tore up a lot of grass and laid it before her so that she should not be hungry, and I fastened the door with a stick. Of course I must milk her. The milk I could set up on the shelf there in the smithy; perhaps I could churn butter! As for cream porridge, there would be no difficulty at all about having that now as often as I wished.

I stole into the kitchen to get something I could milk into, but Great-Aunt came upon me so suddenly that I couldn't get hold of anything but a pint measure. That was pretty small for the use I had for it, but I must try to make it do.

I don't know whether any of you ever tried to milk a cow, but I can tell you that it isn't easy to milk one that kicks and thrashes its tail about—especially if you have to milk into a pint measure. At last I got the measure full, however, and set it up on the shelf. Of course it was rather sooty and dirty there, but I would wash the shelf in the morning. I gave Brownie a new supply of grass and then left

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her for the night. I had not said a word about all my plans for the cow to a single person.

Well! In the evening Hedvig, the milk-maid, came to the house frightened almost out of her wits. She couldn't find Brownie anywhere, and I could see that she was ready to believe that the goblins had been at work. Excitement ran high, especially with Great-Aunt.

“Didn’t I know it? You shall soon both hear and see that something dreadful has happened to Brownie,” Great-Aunt said solemnly.

Then I had to tell where Brownie was, and that it was I who had taken her and put her in the smithy.

“There now! Did any one ever see such a girl?” said Great-Aunt. “You ought to be whipped, big as you are, to put a cow in such a place and give it neither food nor water.”

O dear! O dear! I had never thought to give the cow water the whole day!

Well, Hedvig went to the smithy and let Brownie out; so there was an end to that amusement. And when I went to get my pint

measure of milk the next day, it had such a thick layer of soot and dust on it that I gave it to Dan, the dog, and I had hard work to get even him to drink it.

When we had been at the Parsonage about a fortnight, Peter, the dean's son, came to make a visit, too. He had grown shyer and more freckled than ever since I saw him last, I thought. He spoke never a word when he was in the living-room, but it was rather jolly to have him with us, even though I now had two boys to look after instead of one. There is always something to see to with such boys,—that they cut the cheese nicely at the table, change their shirts often enough, comb their hair properly, and all such matters.

Great-Aunt was cross about many things, but one thing made her very angry, and that was if we ate any of her yellow raspberries. The red ones we might take a few of, but the yellow ones we mustn't even think of touching.

One morning when I lay out on the grass under the avenue trees reading "Waldemar

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the Conqueror," I heard all at once a mysterious rustling behind the raspberry-bushes in the garden. I peeped between the bushes and—wasn't it just as I had thought?—there sat Karsten and Peter picking yellow raspberries and putting them into their straw hats.

When they heard me, they took to their heels, over the garden fence and off towards the churchyard. As I caught up with them, Peter said:

"If you'll promise not to tell on us, Inger Johanne, you shall have some of the berries." Both the boys had their hats half full.

Well, really, it is awfully mean to tattle, and the raspberries were so tempting, not one worm-eaten—and why should Peter and Karsten eat them all, I ask you? So we divided them equally and sat on one of the grave-stones to eat them.

I had forgotten "Waldemar the Conqueror" that I had thrown down and left lying in the grass, and just think! When I went to get it, Dan was playing with it, and

torn-out leaves were scattered all over the avenue.

“ You bad, bad dog, let go, I say! ”

At last I got it away from him, but he had torn out eight leaves, and crumpled and bitten several others. You may be sure I was disgusted with myself and my carelessness, but I said nothing about the book to any one. I always looked at it guiltily though, where it stood in the bookcase, knowing that Aunt Magda did not dream that anything was wrong with it. But she was always so very kind to us, that before I went away I was awfully sorry about “ Waldemar the Conqueror ” and those raspberries. Peter and Karsten weren’t the least bit sorry, they said, because the berries they picked were so near the ground that Great-Aunt, who is old and stout, couldn’t possibly have picked them or even have seen them; but I thought it was horrid of us, anyway.

At last I wrote a little bit of a note,—the paper wasn’t much more than an inch square,

—which I gave to Aunt Magda asking her not to read it until after I had gone. In the note I told about the book and the raspberries and begged her not to be angry, as I was so sorry.

It was now towards the end of vacation. Soon there would be no more jumping in the haycocks or riding home on the big loads of hay, no more raspberries and cream for dessert at dinner, no more bonny-clabber at supper; and Saturday would be the last time that I could be Uncle's driver this year.

When Uncle goes to the other parish church or to visit the sick, I am always allowed to drive him down to the shore. You see they have to go everywhere by boat from the Parsonage. Uncle has to ride in a funny way. He is so awfully stout that he has great difficulty in getting into a carriage, so he rides in a single sleigh, scraping over the road on wooden runners. I sit on the tiny high seat behind and crack the whip. We don't go very fast on the road to the shore because Uncle is

so heavy, but when I go back I sit in the sleigh and drive so fast that the sand spatters on my ears. It is great fun.

The day before we were to go home, one of the Cochin China hens was sick. It may have eaten some salt that had been spilled outside of the storehouse. At any rate, it was sick and ran round and round continually; it was horrid to see. The trouble must be in its head. I thought of putting a wet bandage on it, such as people use when they have headache, but to put a wet bandage on a hen that is spinning round and round would be a little difficult.

I ran in to Great-Aunt. "Oh, Great-Aunt, there is a hen that is sick and that keeps spinning round and round and round! What shall we do with it?"

"Oh, it will have to spin till it stops," said Great-Aunt.

There was no use. Nobody here at the Parsonage understood about hens. When I went away no one would care about that poor sick thing, or do anything for it, I was sure.

I went out to the barn to speak to the milk-maid.

"Dear Hedvig, if you can't cure that Cochin China hen, you must chop its head off, the minute I have gone."

"Oh, no! I'd never dare do that unless Mistress herself said so."

"Please, please do, Hedvig. No one will take any care of it when I'm not here."

"But you know I don't dare because of the old lady." That was Great-Aunt.

"Oh, yes, Hedvig. You are so kind. Please do it and quickly, too." I felt as if I ought to say this even if I didn't believe she would do what I told her to do. The poor sick hen!

Well, our visit at the Parsonage was over and we were starting for home. Aunt Magda, Great-Aunt and Uncle and Mr. Witt, the old lawyer, went to the wharf with us, and they all stood there and waved and waved. Uncle waved his cane and Mr. Witt, who

wore a linen dust-coat, waved his long coat-tails. Then what shouts from shore and boat!

“Good-bye!” “Good-bye!” “G-o-o-o-d-by-e!”

Jon was in the best of humors as he rowed us from the shore to the steamer. I didn’t know whether it was because he would now be rid of us for this year or the present of money I had given him, that made him so pleasant.

“Good luck to all three on your journey,” called Jon as he shoved his boat from the steamer.

For a while we could see the church tower and the roof of the Parsonage between the trees; then the steamer rounded an island and we saw them no more.

III

THE LOST KEY

MRS. POLBY is the sort of person who stands on her front steps, with arms akimbo, every minute when she isn't working, and talks with every one who passes by. That is why she knows all that is going on; and she knows, too, every single hen in the town and every single dog and every single person.

One time she blamed me for something which I hadn't done at all; and from that very time we became good friends!

Now you shall hear about it from beginning to end.

Mrs. Polby has a son named Karl Johan,—a pale, namby-pamby boy who is offended if you only look at him. In this, he is like his mother, who is easily offended, too, but otherwise they are very different. She is a regular roly-poly, with round eyes and round, rosy

cheeks, works hard in her vegetable garden, and talks a great deal, as I have told you.

It is rather unfortunate that Karl Johan is so namby-pamby when he has such a kingly name. That's why we tease him, calling him Karl Johan Gustavus Adolphus Kristian Fredrik Julius Cæsar Polby or other grand names; and he gets so furious that he runs home and tattles to his mother. Then Mrs. Polby stands on her steps and holds a Judgment Day for us, blaming me especially; so you can understand that she and I have never been very good friends.

Back of her house, Mrs. Polby has a big garden where she grows a quantity of cabbages which she sells in the autumn.

In the farthest end of the garden there is an old tumble-down building where she stores the cabbages until they are sold.

Although Mrs. Polby doesn't know it, we often play hide-and-seek in that building, for there are so many closets and bins and little rooms in it where we can hide. The house is

so old and rickety that there are big cracks everywhere in the floor and the walls.

One day Mother said to me, "Run down and buy two heads of cabbage from Mrs. Polby." Off I ran like the wind, as I always do. Mrs. Polby, for a wonder, was not on her steps, but Karl Johan sat in the kitchen drinking coffee out of a big bowl.

"Well, Karl Johan Victor Emmanuel Clodevig," said I, "have you any cabbages to sell?"

He began to scold at a great rate, his face in the bowl the whole time, but he didn't answer my question about cabbages; so I thought it was best to find Mrs. Polby herself, and I ran out to the vegetable field.

The door of the shanty stood open, and one cabbage-head after another came dancing out. She is in there, I thought, and probably not in good humor, for the cabbages were being thrown with a certain wrathful haste. I couldn't see Mrs. Polby herself, for she was farther inside the house.

True enough, there she was, hard at work in the midst of her cabbages, and very red in the face; she was throwing out the rotten ones, and, as I had thought, was not in a very gentle mood.

“I should like two heads of cabbage, Mrs. Polby,” I said. “But I must tell you that your son has been talking horridly to me.”

“Is that so? Well, who is it he learns such talk from, sauce-box?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said I. “But I should like the cabbages right away.”

No, she hadn’t any cabbages, she said; they all rotted and she was sick and tired of the whole business, and, anyway, she sold no cabbages to persons who called her Karl Johan nicknames.

“Do you call Julius Cæsar, and Gustavus Adolphus and Clodevig nicknames, Mrs. Polby?” I asked.

“Heathen names and dog names we have no use for in this country,” she said, “and you can go your way for you’ll get no cabbages

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from me. Tell your mother so, with my compliments."

With that she went into a little closet at the back of the shanty, and slammed the door after her. Probably she slammed it a little harder than she really meant to, (for she was in a temper, you know,) and the lock caught. At the same moment the key tumbled out of the keyhole, and fell down through a crack in the floor, vanishing in the depth below.

"The key fell through a crack, Mrs. Polby," I called.

Mrs. Polby fumbled at the door, took hold of it and pulled and pushed till the whole house shook.

"Will you unlock this door and do it at once?" she shouted.

"I can't unlock it. The key fell through a crack and under the floor," I shouted back.

Just think! she didn't believe me!

"Don't tell me such a thing as that. You unlock this door this minute!" she screamed.

Nothing I could say would make her be-

lieve that I had not the key. She kept on beating and pounding at the door and berating me for not letting her out.

“Oh, I shall suffocate in here. I certainly shall,—with my asthma!—Oh! Oh!”

It was a very small closet she was in, scarcely bigger than a wardrobe.

“Put your mouth up to that little hole in the door and I’ll run after the locksmith,” I said.

“Oh, no! Don’t go!” shrieked Mrs. Polby. “I don’t dare to stay here alone.”

What in the world should I do? There stood Mrs. Polby with her mouth close to the hole which was about as big as the bunghole in a barrel.

Sometimes her mouth disappeared while she cried, “Oh, my asthma! my asthma!”

“Karl Johan,” I shouted from the door. “Hurry! Come as fast as you can! Your mother is locked in the closet.”

He came dragging himself slowly along as if there were no need of haste.

“Hurry! Hurry!” I shouted anxiously. “She can’t breathe, she says, locked in that little place.”

“Well, let her out then,” said Karl Johan, crossly.

O dear! Like his mother, he thought it was all my doing.

“But I can’t let her out. I can’t! The key is under the floor,” I cried, stamping my foot at him. “But you can get it. You are so thin and small you can creep under the building easily. The key is right below the closet. Do go, Karl Johan.”

“Oh, do, my jewel!” cried his mother from the hole in the door. “Oh, oh, do go!”

But just imagine! He would not go, even when his mother begged him to.

“It’s full of rats under the floor,” said Karl Johan. “I don’t want to go there.”

“Then run for the locksmith,” I said. “Only do hurry.”

Well, Karl Johan went, though he took his own time about it; but I felt so sorry for poor

Mrs. Polby, who was wailing piteously, that I couldn't bear to wait for the locksmith.

"I'll creep under the house, Mrs. Polby," I said. "Just keep calm."

"Oh, will you? God bless you! This is the worst thing that ever happened to me," she moaned.

So I crept under the house. It was all I could do to get along, for the ground was wet and slimy and disgustingly filthy, with old straw, broken bottles, and every kind of trash. And Karl Johan was right—*rats*. Ugh! But I crept and crept. Mrs. Polby stamped on the floor and called all the time so that I should know about where the key would lie.

I fumbled and fumbled in the dark. No, I could not find it. A rat ran right over my hand and I only just managed to keep myself from screaming.

"Can't you find it?" called Mrs. Polby.

There! my hand touched it! I was so glad that I shouted loudly, "I've got it! I'm coming, I'm coming!" as I started to creep out.

But you may well believe that it was difficult to turn one's self around under that floor; it was about the hardest of all.

Ah-h! Now I was out in the air again! My, but it was good! Into the house I bounded, put the key in the lock and flung the door wide open.

Mrs. Polby was sitting on the floor, chalk-white in the face and without power to speak at first. In a moment, though, she threw her arms about my neck with such force that I nearly fell over backward, for she is pretty heavy, I can tell you; then she began to cry.

"I really didn't throw the key away," I said.

"Oh, no! The keyhole has been bad this long time—and you have saved my life — Oh! Oh!"

She kept on coughing and crying and at last said I should have five cabbages as a present; and then she cried again.

"Why do you cry now?" I asked. "Here comes Karl Johan with the locksmith." True



JUST IMAGINE! I REALLY DID GET FIVE HEADS OF CABBAGE
AS A PRESENT.—*Page 43.*

enough—they were coming at full speed with a very long pair of tongs.

“So you’ve been sitting under lock and key, have you?” said the locksmith.

“Don’t talk to me, for I haven’t any breath,” said Mrs. Polby; but at the same minute she gave a scolding lecture to Karl Johan because he would not creep under the floor after the key.

Just imagine! I really did get five heads of cabbage as a present—and had my money besides!

So nowadays whenever I see Mrs. Polby standing on her front steps, I stop and we have a little chat; for we are the very best of friends.

IV

TOBIESEN'S GRAND PARLOR

So MANY strange things are always happening to me. Can you understand why? Some persons (like my aunt who went to Paris) never have anything the least bit interesting happen to them. Why, when she came home, she said (I heard her with my own ears) :

“ I suppose I ought to have a great deal to tell about my trip, but really nothing especial happened and I haven’t seen or done anything worth telling of.”

“ If that’s so,” said Father, “ your trip wasn’t worth the money it cost,” and I agreed with him entirely. If I had gone to Paris, I should have had enough to talk about continually for a month or more. At home they say that if I just go out on the front doorstep, look up and down the street, and come right in again, I have immediately a great deal to tell.

It may well be, however, that I talk a little bit too much—but when so many exciting things are happening all the time, am I to keep still and not talk about them? No, indeed, I'm not that kind of person. Talk I must.

Now you shall hear how I came to be in Tobiesen's grand parlor where none of the town folk have ever been; for it was in a curious way, as you will agree.

Tobiesen is an assistant at the Custom House—but he doesn't look like the other officers. They are all short and stout and red-faced—at least they are in our town. But it is not so long ago that Tobiesen came here, so probably that is why he is so unlike the other officers. He is very tall and cross-looking; won't talk to people and doesn't associate with any one. Would you like to know what he does when he sits alone at home in the evenings? He embroiders,—works on canvas! Ingeborg, our maid, says that all men who do needlework are cross; so it isn't strange that Tobiesen looks so glum and disagreeable, since

he sits and sews on canvas every evening. He is not married, and he lives alone, a little way out of town over the new road, in a house that he has bought and made all pretty and bright with new paint. Tobiesen, as I have said, never goes anywhere and nobody ever goes to his house; yet both Mina and I have sat for a whole hour in his best parlor! and that without having any idea of doing it! I was afraid enough that time, I can tell you.

I don't know whether it is so where you live,—that a great many wandering Gypsy tribes come to the town,—but they certainly come to ours. There are Flintian's tribe and Griffenfeldt's tribe and Long Sarah's tribe, and many others.

Most of them come by land with packs on their backs full of tinware and woven baskets that they wish to sell; and they always have a crowd of dirty dark-skinned children and cross women and cross dogs with them. Some Gypsies, though, come by boat—but I don't know any of those except Lars and Guro, who

belong to Flintian's tribe. They own a big boat exactly like a pilot-boat and travel from town to town and deal in pottery and rags. They always bring their boat to the wharf near the market-place.

My, but you should see Lars and Guro! Both are dark, lively little persons. There is only this difference between them: Guro wears as little as she can, while Lars has as much as possible on him—he is all stuffed out with clothes and rags.

Guro says that Lars is weak in the head, and that anything weak must be kept warm, so Lars wears a heavy fur cap all summer, no matter how hot the sun is there on the wharf.

Guro attends to the rag business and Lars to the pottery. He has some savings-banks of red clay in the form of a bird with a slit in the back which all the children in town are crazy to buy. Guro with bare brown legs fairly wades in the heaps of rags on the deck, and scolds at the children who stand on the wharf and watch her.

Perhaps you are wondering what Lars and Guro have to do with Tobiesen's grand parlor. Well, just wait.

The longer Lars and Guro are in town, the crosser they get at all of us children. At first they are quite pleasant and let us go down on the deck where they are and peep into their cabin—my! but it looks disgusting—but later no such favors are to be thought of. Whether this is because Lars and Guro, when their business has brought them in some money, are always drunk, or because all the children are so horrid about teasing them, I don't know; but the fact is that when the rag-boat has been at the wharf about a week, Lars and Guro are so angry and behave so abominably that a policeman has to stand on the wharf all day to stop Guro when she gets too outrageous. Their visit usually ends with their being told by the police to get away from our town with their boat the quickest they can.

The rag-boat had been at the wharf about four days and Lars and Guro were, even for them,

in an unusually bad humor. Guro had promised me and the other children a mighty warm welcome if she once got hold of us. And on top of that she promised that she would surely get us in her clutches before she left the town, for worse children, she said, were not to be found along the whole coast. That long-legged one, the Judge's girl, (that was I) was the worst of the whole lot. For that matter, said Guro, she didn't care whether we were the children of priest or prophet or magistrate, she would catch us just the same.

One afternoon Mina and I went for a walk up on the new road. Not a person was in sight. Oh, yes, there was; Lars and Guro were coming down the road towards us. They walked hand in hand, staggering a little, and quarreling loudly as they came. Mina and I did not dare to pass them on that lonely road with no one else near, so we ran up the hill and hid while they passed us.

But when they were just below us, Mina called out, "Raggedy Guro—raggedy Lars!"

From that came all the trouble. I was awfully provoked with Mina. Really, she might rather have let them go in peace that time.

But you should have seen and heard the commotion, then!

Guro and Lars dashed back to where they could scramble up the bank. They showed that they could both make good use of their legs, I can tell you. There was no time to be lost, for they had almost caught up with us.

Mina and I ran as we had never run in our lives before, hopped over stones, and ran and ran. Oh, how afraid I was!

Guro was after us swift as the wind; Lars had so many clothes on that he was clumsy and slow in his movements, and was very soon left behind.

For an instant, I thought it might be safest to run farther up the hill, but no, my next thought was that it was best to get to the road again, so I sprang down five or six feet at one leap—Mina after me. Guro dared not take such a leap as that. Luckily for us she had

to run a roundabout way, so we had a little the start of her.

Not a sound came from Mina or me, but Guro scolded incessantly. We ran for dear life. Lars and Guro had both reached the road now, and the noise they made as they ran could be heard a long way. Oh! There stood Tobiesen's house!

“Come, let us run into Tobiesen's,” I exclaimed, panting. In a twinkling we were through the court and in the hall; we rushed to a door and found ourselves in a fine, well-furnished room with white shades pulled down over the windows. The key was on the inside of the parlor door and I turned it hastily. There we stood. But at that instant Lars and Guro came tramping into the hall; Guro shrieked and scolded and vowed that she would find us, sure as fate. I was horribly afraid, more so than I can describe; Mina sat herself flat on the floor with her eyes bulging with terror.

There were hasty steps in the room above us,

and then from the top of the stairs came the thin, high voice that was surely Tobiesen's, calling, "Now, in heaven's name, what is all this rumpus?"

"We want to get hold of the girls who came home just now," shrieked Guro with the voice she uses when she is in her most furious rages on the rag-boat.

"Came home? No one comes home here." Tobiesen trudged down the stairs in his slippers.

"I don't know what kind of man you are," said Guro, "for I've never seen your face before; but it's that young one of yours I want to get hold of—the one who came home here just now with that long-legged girl of the Judge's."

"Are you crazy, folk? I have no young one—I am not married."

"When we find them, we'll break every bone in their bodies," Lars' thick voice growled from under his fur cap and out of his muffled throat.

Mina and I looked at each other. What a frightful position we were in—only a little thin door between us and that furious Guro and Lars and with no one to protect us but Tobiesen, who might be angry with us, too!

Guro screamed louder and louder.

“If you think I am afraid of you, you make a big mistake,” she shouted. “I’m going to find them, be sure of that.” She rushed farther into the hall, and shook one of the doors. Tobiesen spoke again, his voice sounding perfectly desperate.

“See here, you two,—here—take this, but go—only go away.”

Guro’s manner and tone changed at once.

“Thanks and honor—thanks and honor—My, such a wonderful nice man! Now, truly, you can’t tell by the outside of folk how they are inside—such a wonderful nice man!”

Evidently he had given them money to make them go away.

“Now go,” Tobiesen repeated. “Go away at once.”

There! They were out of the door and he turned the key in its lock after them.

“Whew!” Tobiesen gave a long whistle of relief, but if he had known that we were in his grand parlor he’d have whistled louder yet! I had a little hope that he might go up-stairs again; but no, he went into a room just across the hall.

“Oh, Mina! How splendid that they have gone!”

“But I’m almost as afraid of Tobiesen as I am of Lars and Guro,” whispered Mina, looking up at me.

“Sh—just keep still. We must wait a little while.” We listened and listened; not a sound was to be heard in the whole house.

Perhaps we could steal away now; but, scared as we were, I simply had to see Tobiesen’s fancy work.

Everywhere in the room, on the chairs and on the sofa were placed small white covers that must surely have embroidered pieces under them. I went on tiptoe over the floor.

“Why, Mina! Really, his work isn’t so bad! Come and see.” There was an angel’s head worked on canvas in white beads on a sofa-pillow, and a harp among roses on the back of a chair.

But Mina dared not stir from the door.

“Sh-sh! Don’t talk. Come back again, Inger Johanne; he will hear you. Ugh! if he should come ——”

I turned the key of the parlor door slowly, slowly round. It was great good luck for us that everything in Tobiesen’s house was so well taken care of, for the lock had just been oiled, and the key didn’t make a sound. We tiptoed out into the hall, in dead silence, only making motions to each other.

We reached the street door, turned that key as carefully as we had the other, opened the door quickly—and we were out!

When we had gone three or four steps from the house I turned and looked back. At the door stood Tobiesen staring after us. Such astonishment as his face showed I never saw

on any other face. Mina and I ran down the street as fast as we could.

Well, that's the way we escaped from Tobiesen as well as from Lars and Guro, but tell me, don't you think it was a frightful situation for us?

Ever since that time, when I see Tobiesen in the distance, I turn and go into another street, I am so afraid he will recognize me.

In the evening of the same day that Lars and Guro had chased us, they were sent out of town for quarreling in the streets, and since then nothing has been seen of them.

V

THE DANCING-SCHOOL

A DANCING-MASTER had come to town and almost all the children were to go to his dancing-school. He was Swedish, his name was Baklind, and he had engaged a room at Madam Pirk's.

Madam Pirk kept cows and made her living chiefly by selling milk. She sold cream, too; but into that she put potato flour so that it should look thick. She was glad to rent a room, you may be sure.

It was an immense room on the first floor and ran the whole length of the house; its big windows looked out on both the yard and the street. Under this room was the cellar where Madam Pirk kept her cows; that must have been why there was always such a peculiar odor in the room.

The wall-paper on this drawing-room repre-

sented a countless multitude of green-clad shepherds who played on golden horns in a crimson sunset glow. Midway down one of the long walls stood a monster of an old-fashioned stove, an enormous bulgy contrivance with a pipe that went straight up through the ceiling. To make a fire in that stove would take half a cord of wood, I do believe!

Fortunately for Madam Pirk and Mr. Baklind, there was no question of heating the room. The month of May had come, there was a south wind, and a constant drip-drip outside from the melting snow in the roof gutters. But probably the room was somewhat cold, for Mr. Baklind always wore his spring coat, I remember. If we children wished a little more warmth, the idea was that we should get it by dancing.

Mr. Baklind was a tall, stout man with long hair falling down over his neck. It never occurred to me then, but now I am pretty sure that he curled his hair with curling-tongs. I remember scarcely anything else about him but

his legs, which were very thin. He wore striped stockings and pointed patent-leather shoes, and came every day with these dancing-shoes in his pocket, changing to them right there in the dancing-hall while we stood around looking at him.

Baklind himself was the whole orchestra; he played the violin, tramped out the rhythm, and sang, “Tra-la-la!” or Swedish songs. He was a happy fellow, that Mr. Baklind! I should like to know where he waltzes around now.

There were about thirty children who went to Baklind’s dancing-school. We stood arranged according to height; girls in a long row on one side of the room, boys on the other side. Massa was the tallest girl and I came next. Nils Trap was the tallest boy, and Massa was to have him as her partner.

Angemal Terkelsen fell to my lot, a big, awkward boy who could neither bow nor dance, and would never swing himself round except when he came to a corner of the hall, where he had to turn. At first he danced so poorly,

that he had to practise all alone while the rest of us sat and watched him. He was stiff as a poker and looked bored all the time he was in the class.

I was mightily offended with Baklind because I had to have Angemal for my partner, although of course Baklind was not to blame that Angemal and I were of the same height. Still, I remember that at that time I thought it was all his fault. Dance with Angemal I must, two hours every day for six weeks.

Towards the last, however, he wasn't so bad. Whether it was I or Baklind who had improved him, I don't know, but he even grew rather agreeable. He found out one day that I was awfully fond of chocolate, and always after that he brought me a thick cake of chocolate, and sometimes two cakes. Angemal's father was a storekeeper. I am afraid that many pounds of chocolate disappeared from the shop during those weeks of dancing-school.

Every evening between six and eight o'clock, Madam Pirk's garden fence was full of street

urchins who had climbed up there to look in at us who were dancing. They made a tremendous rumpus out there, threw each other down off the fence, laughed and shouted.

In the hall, the floor rocked under our sixty feet, the cows in the cellar lowed, the old stove shook and rattled. Baklind played the violin, struck one and another sinner with his bow, counted out the time: one-two-three-hop! one-two-three-hop! I shoved and dragged Angemal, and the whole hall was in a cloud of dust that sifted down from the ceiling and out of the corners and from Madam Pirk's old straight-backed chairs.

In the breathing-time between dances, we sat and rested, like hens gone to roost, on Madam Pirk's steep, white-scoured attic stairs; or else Baklind taught us how we should enter a room or look out of a window or do something else in a proper manner. The most beautiful, but also the most complicated way to look out of a window was the following: feet crossed, body in a curve, and arms leaning

lightly on the window-sill. He added also that, having taken this position, the person ought to turn his gaze upward. I wonder if Angemal Terkelsen, or any other of us ever stands and looks out of the window in that fashion?

Once in a while Baklind would get frantic over the street boys perching on the garden fence and peeping in at us. Never in my life have I seen a person leap as our dancing-master did, when he dashed out after those boys. I am not exaggerating when I say that he took steps five or six feet long. With uplifted cane and curls flying every-which-way, he literally stretched himself out flat against Madam Pirk's fence. But if Baklind thought he could get hold of Stian, the watchman's boy, or George, the street-sweeper's, he made a great mistake. They were up on the hill like a streak of lightning, pointing their fingers at him and roaring with laughter. "Such wolf-cubs—I'd like to break the noses off of those imps," said Baklind when he came in all out of breath.

When dancing-school had lasted for about a month, the big old stove began to shake and clatter in a very disquieting manner.

“Poor old thing!” said Baklind. “He doesn’t care much for all this dancing. I think we must brace him up a little. We’ll tie a rope around him!”

Then things were lively for a few minutes. Angemal ran home for a rope. Baklind put one chair on another, balanced himself on the top one and tied the stout rope around the stove and then to some big nails in the wall.

“There! now I think the old fellow is happy!” said Baklind as he hopped down from the chairs and drew back in the hall to see how the arrangement looked.

But Baklind had that time reckoned without his hostess. The next evening Madam Pirk presented herself in the hall, her face wearing an extraordinarily displeased expression.

“What is that arrangement for?” asked Madam Pirk pointing to the rope-bound stove.

“I was afraid the old fellow would fall in a swoon,” said Baklind. “I thought it would be wise to support him a little.”

“No, thank your majesty! My stove can stand alone perfectly well.”

“As Madam will,” said Baklind. So he got up on the chairs again and took down the rope.

Two evenings later, we were dancing the polka mazurka with great gusto. Baklind played the violin, the floor rocked, the stove and even the pipe shook and rattled violently.

At home, I had heard Gunhild, one of the maids, say that to dance the polka mazurka “with bumps”—that is, bumping into the other couples, was the greatest fun in the world. I suggested to Angemal that we should dance that way, and he immediately agreed. We bumped against all the others, pushed and shoved, and enjoyed ourselves tremendously.

But all at once we heard a crash from the stove—a crash so loud that it drowned all the uproar we were making. Every one of us

stopped instantly, and stared in terror at the big, old stove. And at that very moment—well, any one who has never seen a stove break all to pieces can have but a faint idea of it—at that very moment, it was as if the legs were struck from under the stove, it sprang apart in different places, and the big heavy iron pieces toppled, clanked against each other and fell with a frightful bang on the floor. The long stovepipe came last. It pitched far out in the room amongst us, and an avalanche of soot spread like thick smoke through the drawing-room. We all sprang for the door, Baklind with us. Madam Pirk and her maid came rushing into the entry. A heavy cloud of soot was pouring out of the door of the dancing-room.

“What is it?” shrieked Madam Pirk. “What is going on? Are you tearing the house down?”

“Oh, the old chap fell over. He wouldn’t stand there any longer,” said Baklind.

Madam Pirk shrieked and wept and scolded,

scolded Baklind, shrieked to us that we should pack ourselves off out of her house. She didn't wish to see even a shadow of any of us inside her doors ever again. But she wept over all the green-robed shepherds around the walls. It was indeed to be feared that they would never again play their horns in such rosy red light as heretofore.

“Well, it isn't my fault,” said Baklind.
“You wouldn't let me tie it together.”

At this, all Madam Pirk's wrath poured out on Baklind's curly head.

“Is it work for a grown man to traipse around, and do nothing but dance? Well, if you don't this minute dance out of my house, I shall call both the mayor and the police.”

Nothing would pacify her. We had danced for the last time in Madam Pirk's big room.

During the two weeks that remained of the course, we had to crowd ourselves together in Baklind's room at the hotel; and Angemal and I were not allowed to dance the polka mazurka “with bumps” any more.

VI

OUR BONFIRE ON ST. JOHN'S NIGHT

I DON'T know anything more delightful than St. John's Night,—beautiful, bright St. John's Night.

There are, though, three awfully jolly days in the year: Christmas, my birthday, and St. John's or Midsummer Day.

Christmas, particularly Christmas Eve, is something very special; it stands entirely by itself, and seems to mean Father and Mother and all the family. No one should be with us then except those we are most fond of—those that belong here at home.

Then my birthday is my very own day. What I like best about that are the presents I get and also that I am a year older. For, really, isn't it tedious to keep on being twelve years old everlastingly? Of course, when any one asked me last year how old I was, I always

said, "In my thirteenth year." That sounded older,—not so unspeakably childish.

But St. John's Day! Then there is pleasure and sport for everybody. There is no school; the fields everywhere are bright with spring flowers, and the houses are decorated outside with little birch-trees standing beside the doors. Inside, birch leaves trim the stoves, fresh garlands hang from the ceiling around the walls, buttercups and daisies and long waving grasses are in bouquets in all the rooms.

And perhaps we have cream porridge for dinner.

Last and best of all, though, are the St. John's bonfires in the evening, blazing and shining wherever you look.

No one stays at home on St. John's Night except the very old folks. The other people of the town row out to the islands with big lunch-baskets and bottles of fruit-juice.

Many take accordions with them, and the music, coming over the water, sounds sad and joyful at the same time. It wouldn't seem

like St. John's Night at all if Agent Levorsen did not play "Sons of Norway" out in the summer night on Green Island. The sailor boys at the Point play such tunes as:

"Naa kommer jenta med kjolen grön.
Aa hei du, aa haa!"¹

And everything is oh, so jolly and gay!

On the hills round about in the town the old people sit among the small houses and look at the blazing fires and think of the days when they were young and had jolly times out on the islands on St. John's Night.

"Yes, yes!" say the old women, sitting with their hands under their aprons and wagging their heads sideways.

One after another the fires are lighted. "See there!" "And see there!" "And there!" The air is warm and soft and still. The islands are swarming with people who eat cake and drink fruit-juice and laugh and dance and sometimes fight.

¹ Now comes the maiden with dress of green.
Oh, heigh, dear! Oh, ho!

The bonfires crackle and flash up against the dark sky and the sparks fly around far and near. Suddenly a piece of board or a charred butter-firkin tumbles down from the fire and the boys make wagers as to which of them can come nearest to the fire without burning himself. Their faces are so black with soot that they look like chimney-sweeps.

O bright, jolly St. John's Night!

But now you shall hear how we celebrated it once. I shall never forget that celebration, for it ended in terror.

We shouldn't have thought of having a bonfire if it hadn't been for Andreas, a boy who came from near Stavanger last spring. His father, Oscar Eisland, works at the wharf in Espeviken, and he and his wife and five children live in a tiny red house on our hill. That is why I know the family so well.

In their house there are two beds, one bench, and one table, and nothing more except newspaper pictures on the walls; pictures of murders, weddings in Russia, kings, and so on.

Although Oscar and his family are surely not rich, I have never seen any people as happy as they are. That is why I like so much to be up there.

Well, it was Andreas who suggested that we children who lived on the hill should have a St. John's Night bonfire of our very own. Children where he came from did that, he said; and my brother Karsten and I thought it would be awfully good fun.

We were not going to say a word to any one about it. It was to be a glorious surprise for the whole town when all at once a big bonfire blazed out on our hill.

But it wasn't easy to find things to burn, I can tell you. All that we collected we were to hide in a place on the hill that we called "Sahara." We had many places on the hill that we had given names to, "Nagasaki," "Paris," and so on; but "Sahara" was the best for a hiding-place.

Andreas, Karsten, and I each had our particular work to do. Karsten was to get kero-

sene for us to pour over the fire to make it burn very briskly. And just think! He took an empty bottle and went around to all the cooks on our street and asked them for a few drops of kerosene. That was stupid, I thought, for naturally the maids would tattle—but Karsten said no, cooks never tattled.

I did nothing but spy around in all the woodsheds and lofts I could get into for things to burn. You see, we couldn't expect to get hold of old boats as the people on the islands did. A few bits of board I found, of course, but nothing of any account.

Andreas was the handiest person you can imagine, swift as a chamois and very strong. Every day he, with dirty bare legs, appeared in our hall and asked if there was something for him to carry up to "Sahara," for that was his business; but usually there was nothing.

Day after day went by, and still the store of fuel up in "Sahara" was not very big. Then one day my eyes fell on an old bedstead that stood in Mrs. Petersen's woodshed. It was

very dirty and had stood there a long time, surely half a year.

I could not get that bedstead out of my mind. Mrs. Petersen couldn't care the least bit about it, since it had stood in the woodshed so long. It was very old, and painted red, and would burn gloriously. Probably Mrs. Petersen would only be thankful if we took it, dirty as it was, out of her way.

I consulted with Andreas and Karsten. "Oh, yes, we'll take it," said Andreas. I rather think Andreas would have taken the two beds out of his house, if he could, so as to have something to burn.

"If Mrs. Petersen were only not so severe, we might ask her for the bed," said Karsten. Karsten always says people are "severe" when they are cross or angry.

No, ask Mrs. Petersen for the bed we dared not, that was sure. But we couldn't have a bonfire without fuel, so if you'll believe it, we took the old bedstead one evening without so much as saying "by your leave" to any one.

Andreas took it apart and carried it all up to "Sahara" as if it were a feather!

My, but that would make a grand bonfire!

First the bedstead, then a big butter-firkin filled with heather on top of it, and in the firkin we fixed a tall pole with an enormous bunch of heather soaked in kerosene tied on its top.

Now people needn't plume themselves on their grand bonfires out on the island, for our bonfire would be seen as far away as Jomfruland, that was certain.

The weather wasn't very good that St. John's Night. It had been dingy and gray all day, getting ready to rain; and that was good surely, for we hadn't had rain for four weeks and the grass was stiff and yellow and the heather as dry as tinder over the whole hill.

But since the rain had waited so long, it might as well wait until St. John's Night was over. That is what I thought then, at any rate.

The whole afternoon we stayed up there on the hill, arranging and improving our pile of

fuel, so that everything should be perfect for the evening. From that height we could see over the whole town, into the streets and courtyards. Men looked about as big as pins, and children looked like pinheads; yet we knew every pin and pinhead we saw down there. We saw the boys rowing out to the islands; and far beyond the islands we could see Skagerak, gray and billowy, with tiny white-capped waves, and with heavy gray air lying above its waters.

O dear, O dear! How the time dragged before it grew dark that evening! At last we could wait no longer but lighted our bonfire before any others were lighted.

The bunch of heather at the top of the pole blazed up like a great bouquet of fire. It looked perfectly magnificent, really.

There! Now Mrs. Petersen's bedstead had caught. Hurrah! What fun! Greatest fun in the world!

We danced and skipped and shouted, "Hurrah!" looking towards the town all the

time to see whether any one noticed our splendid bonfire. Hurrah! Hurrah!

The wind began to blow,—to blow very hard. Sparks flew all over the hill. We could not stand in the lee of the bonfire, for it would have been like standing in a sea of flame.

Well, if the townsfolk didn't see that fire now, it must be that they had no eyes in their heads. Andreas turned somersaults in the heather. Hurrah! Hurrah!

But all at once I noticed some little flames springing up here and there.

“The heather is on fire!” I shouted.

“Hurrah!” shouted Andreas and Karsten in high glee.

But at that moment something seemed to tighten in my chest. I was afraid with a great sudden fear.

“Now all that will be a St. John's Night bonfire,” said Karsten gleefully, pointing towards the moor.

“Are you crazy? Put it out! Only put it out!” I shouted.



WE DANCED AND SKIPPED AND SHOUTED, "HURRAH!"

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The whole hill was covered with heather as far as one could see, heather as dry as tinder from the long drought. Suppose it should all get on fire! I rushed forward, tramped in the burning heather and beat it with a stick.

“Help me put it out! Help me put it out!” I cried. The boys were frightened, too, now, and we all worked frantically; but the sparks showered down faster and faster and the fire seemed to blaze up everywhere at the same instant.

It was terrible. Down in the streets people stopped and looked up and some began to run. I was ready to throw myself into the burning heather, so terrified was I. And the wind howled and blew and swarms of sparks danced about in all directions.

Suppose the whole moor should take fire,—and perhaps the whole world be burnt up—it would all be our fault. The bonfire crackled and blazed against the dark sky and the flames hissed in the heather.

Those moments I cannot write about. I

don't believe I thought of anything, I was so overwhelmed by fear.

I tramped, I shrieked, I ran right into the midst of the burning heather and shouted I don't know what.

Over the moor some people came running swiftly, big, smoke-begrimed men, Constable Midsen, Alexander Brygga, Herman Dilt, and many, many others.

"What lawlessness and foolery is this?" shouted Constable Midsen. "There is hard punishment, and fines besides, for such doings. Help here, fellows. Quick!"

The whole of our beautiful bonfire was thrown down before you could count three, tramped on and put out, Constable Midsen giving the orders.

It seems to me I can hear his voice yet, mingled with the noisy blasts of the wind over the dark moor where the fire still crackled and snapped in the heather.

And it was all our fault! Such hard work as we had had, and such grand fun as we had

expected to have! It would be best for me to run away at once, I thought; but no, it would be a shame to do that. Midsen held Karsten and Andreas as in a vise so that they should not run away; and it was just as much my fault as theirs.

I sat on a stone and cried hard; Andreas choked and cried and dried his eyes on his jacket-sleeves, first one and then the other; but Karsten fairly bellowed—his way of crying.

The men kept on tearing up the heather so as to stop the fire, and scolding us constantly. I wonder whether you can possibly imagine how perfectly horrid it was. I shall never again have a bonfire of my own, if I live to be a hundred years old.

Suddenly I felt a raindrop—then another and another—and then it began to pour.

“Well, you may thank the Lord for His merciful judgment,” said Midsen. “Now the fire will be put out by the rain.”

And what do you think? I cried harder than ever then for joy; and in my heart I

thanked God over and over that He had let the rain come just at that time.

When the fire was entirely out and we trudged down the hill, it was almost pitch-dark; water trickled from my clothes, my eyes smarted from the smoke, my hands were scorched, but the worst was, I was unspeakably afraid of what Father would say.

What he said and what came afterward, I won't tell of in detail for it was altogether too horrid. I was dreadfully, dreadfully sorry I had not asked Mother about having a bonfire, I can tell you.

Father had to pay Mrs. Petersen for her old bedstead. What do you think of that! Probably he had to pay extra for the dirt on it.

And yet, she was so "severe," as Karsten would say, that she all but chased me out of her house with a broom when I went to beg her pardon.

I had to do that. Father said I must.

Ugh! But of course it *was* wrong to take her bedstead.

VII

IN PECKELL'S HAYLOFT

EVERY once in a while, a traveling photographer comes to our town. They take rather spotty pictures in one or another courtyard under the open sky, seldom pay for the room where they have lodged, and are suddenly gone. Such traveling photographers look almost alike, usually having black curly hair with pomade in it, and pale faces; they parade around in the street, walking quickly as if they were awfully busy.

But one summer a photographer came who was altogether different. In the first place, his name was Cavallius, and he was a little bit of a man; that is, his legs were very short. The upper part of his body was big enough, and his face was large, with a long golden, curly beard that reached down over his chest; and the whole time he was in town, he had big patches of court-plaster behind his ears. He

never looked as if he were busy. He spoke slowly and never walked fast; and there was a kind of dignity about him, from the court-plaster patches to his long golden beard and even to his short legs, that was quite amazing.

That dignified appearance was a real achievement for little Cavallius; for truly it can't be very easy to appear dignified with almost no legs and with plasters behind the ears.

The first time I saw Cavallius on the street I naturally had no idea who he was, so of course I followed him till I saw that he went into Stiansen's bakery. Fortunately I had two *öre*¹ in my pocket, so I could make an errand in the shop. I had an overwhelming desire, you see, to find out something about this queer person. Baker Stiansen was in the shop himself. "Two *öre* worth of brown barley sugar, please."

Stiansen's barley sugar is never very good,—it is too soft,—but of course I had to buy something, since I had gone in.

¹ An *öre* is less than three-tenths of a cent.

“Who was that who came in here just now, Stiansen, a little man with a yellow beard?” I asked.

“Oh, he is one who takes pictures of people,” Stiansen answered carelessly.

“What is his name?”

“His name is nothing less than Cavallius.”

That is the way I found out who Cavallius was. I didn’t like to ask any more questions, although there was still much I wanted to know. After this, however, I had a tremendous desire to peep into Stiansen’s courtyard to see how the little photographer arranged things there; but I didn’t dare venture through the gate, because Stiansen is so cross and disagreeable if you even stick your nose in his courtyard.

But one day it suddenly occurred to me that any one in the loft up in Peckells’ barn would have the most perfect view over Cavallius in the courtyard. I went immediately to Massa Peckell.

“Oh, Massa!” I said, “let’s go up into

your hayloft. Through that round window there we can look right down on the little photographer taking pictures in Stiansen's courtyard."

Yes, indeed, Massa would go.

Stiansen's courtyard is a narrow oblong, and the sun beats down upon it bright and hot. We had come at a fortunate moment, it seemed, for Cavallius was just about to photograph fat Barbara who works for Madam Pirk.

Barbara sat stiffly upright on a chair. Her dress was so tight that it looked ready to burst open any minute. Her big, red hands were crossed as if they were tied together at the wrists. Cavallius was arranging the screw she should have at the back of her neck to hold her head still.

"Sh, sh!" I whispered. "Keep perfectly quiet so that he will not notice us." Massa and I scarcely stirred, up there at the loft window.

"Will you sit for a full face or for a profile?" Cavallius asked. He talked in a slow

formal way that corresponded well with his dignified bearing.

“What’s that?” asked Barbara turning herself hastily towards him.

“There, there,” said Cavallius, soothingly. “Will you sit sideways or straight?”

“Straight,” said Barbara. “Talk decent, you, when you talk to decent folk!”

Cavallius was humming a little to himself and took hold of her face to place it in the right position.

He had scarcely put one of his small stumpy fingers against Barbara’s fat cheek before she pushed her big working-woman’s fist with such force against Cavallius’ chest that he tumbled backward. It was an awfully comical sight. Both Massa and I forgot ourselves and shrieked with laughter. Cavallius threw an astonished glance up at the loft window where we stood, but he said nothing. Moreover, he did not lose his air of dignity.

“Are you out of your mind, woman?” asked Cavallius.

“Just you try that again,” said Barbara, looking furious.

Cavallius stooped under the black velvet cloth such as all photographers have over their cameras.

“Look a little pleasant, now,” he said in a coaxing voice as if to a child.

“Look pleasant? At you? Humph! I’d like to catch myself!” Her face was like a thunder-cloud.

“Oh! Oh! I shall split my sides laughing,” said Massa. “Oh! Oh!”

“May I ask the ladies up there to indulge us with their absence?” said Cavallius.

Oh! how we laughed! No, it was altogether too amusing for us to be willing to leave. “No, Cavallius, we’re not going; do not imagine that we are.” Of course we did not dare to say that aloud.

Repeated exhortations to Barbara from Cavallius to look pleasant. Barbara looked, if possible, still more angry, and assured him most positively that if there was anything in

the world she would not do, it was to look pleasant “at such a one as you.”

Massa and I laughed till we were worn out with it.

“That’s right, Barbara,” shouted Massa, “look more fierce. Don’t give in, Barbara.”

“Go away,” said Cavallius, shaking his little stumpy hand threateningly towards us. “Go away, ladies; I will not endure this, on my honor I will not. Go!”

Just think, he called us “ladies”! We ducked down behind the window in silent laughter, then we peeped out again. Cavallius kept on threatening us.

“Go, I say!” We ducked down but popped up again the next instant. Cavallius grew more and more angry. We kept popping down and up and laughing continually, but go away we would not, you may be sure.

At last Barbara’s picture was ready.

“Well, my girl,” said Cavallius, “it isn’t my fault that you look like a lion-tamer in your picture.”

“What is it I look like?” asked Barbara.
“It’s your fault if it’s a horrid picture.”

“That’s right, Barbara,” called Massa.
“Scowl at him. Of course it is his fault.”

“Go away!” roared Cavallius up at us.

Barbara drew backward towards the door and bumped into old Mrs. Huus who was just coming in to be photographed. Mrs. Huus wore a brown silk dress, gold brooch, gold chain, gold bracelets, and some quivering golden ornaments in her hair. People in the town said that Mrs. Huus stuffed cotton into her cheeks to fill them out so as to look younger. I don’t know whether this is true or not, but Mrs. Huus certainly does speak as if her mouth were full.

Cavallius conducted her most respectfully to a chair, but as he went, he shook his fist threateningly again up towards us in the barn window. Mrs. Huus did not see us, but I noticed that she cast a frightened glance at Cavallius as he shook his fist in the air.

He got down on one knee and arranged the

brown silk dress in careful folds. While he knelt there, he turned and again made the threatening gesture towards us. Mrs. Huus sent an anxious look heavenward; evidently she thought he was crazy.

Massa and I tumbled over each other below the window in fits of laughter, although we choked back the noise. Then we heard Cavallius talking, and I put my head up cautiously. Cavallius saw me and threatened again with both fists, but still Mrs. Huus had not seen a sign of us, so to her his angry gestures were unaccountable.

“No, no, no,” she said hastily, getting up. “I don’t think I am very well. I don’t think I care to be photographed to-day.” With that she darted, swift as an arrow, out of the gate without even saying good-bye.

I heard later that she had been mortally afraid the few minutes she was in Cavallius’ studio, because of his shaking his fists towards heaven, and she thought herself fortunate to have come away unharmed.

When Mrs. Huus was gone, Cavallius, with hands at his side, looked up at us.

“There now, ladies, whose fault was that? Whose fault was it, I ask, that that fine lady would not let herself be photographed to-day? It was your fault. I saw that she looked up at you again and again. As true as my name is Isaiah Cavallius, I won’t stand this any longer. If you ladies don’t make yourselves scarce this instant,”—again he shook his fist at us,—“I have something that will make you go, I warn you.”

Massa and I disappeared from the window quick as lightning.

“We mustn’t tease him any more,” said Massa. “He’s too angry.”

“Oh, but it is such fun; so awfully comical.”

“Well, I’m scared; suppose he should shoot up here at us.”

“Nonsense, Massa. Let’s peep out once more.”

There were voices in the courtyard again. I put one eye to the window and saw, if you’ll

believe it, Herman Nibb, the storekeeper, who had come to be photographed. Oh, what fun! That queer Nibb! No, we couldn't go now; it was impossible, with such a prospect of amusement ahead. Cavallius couldn't get hold of us up here, and if he tried, we could run like the wind.

Nibb came into the courtyard, bowing and bowing. He always walks with a dancing step in the street, as if he were on springs. He is surely very vain, for in one day I have seen him wear as many as seven different hats. That is absolutely true. Nibb always has something to do with bankruptcy; either he has just gone bankrupt or is just about to do so. There is never anything in his shop-window but a bunch of shoe-lasts, and he sells only kerosene. Often I should like to go into his shop because he is so queer, but since one can scarcely ask for a sample of shoe-lasts or kerosene, I can't make any errand in there.

“Be so kind as to take a seat,” said Cavallius. “Vignette or the whole figure?”

“Is it any dearer with legs than without legs?” asked Nibb.

“The price is the same for the whole figure,” was the satisfactory answer.

Nibb placed himself in position. He looked as blank as if he didn’t know enough to count four, as he stood there.

“That is a fine expression you have now,” said Cavallius. “Don’t lose that expression and you will have a beautiful picture; don’t lose it. Pshaw! You let it go, after all.”

Nibb strove in vain to re-capture the beautiful expression.

“How was it I looked?” he asked.

I can’t tell you how Massa and I laughed. “We must go, Massa, or I shall die of laughing.” Nevertheless, we did not go.

“Are you there again?” shouted Cavallius. “On my honor, I will not stand this any longer.” With that he went into the house, leaving Nibb alone.

Nibb made an elegant bow to us, whom he saw in the loft window.

“Beautiful weather, little girls,” he observed politely.

“Oh, yes.” We felt as if we were in an oven, it was so hot, and Nibb wiped his forehead every minute.

“Perhaps it is rather temperate,” he continued, bowing to us again.

“It wouldn’t matter if it were a little more temperate,” I said.

Nibb made no reply to this, but remarked, “A queer man, that one,” pointing over his shoulder after Cavallius.

Yes, Massa and Nibb and I could all agree as to that.

But what in the world had become of Cavallius? Could he be looking for us?

“O dear! Suppose he is standing inside behind a curtain and shoots us with a gun!” said Massa. “He said he had something that would make us go away, you know.”

The situation began to be rather uncomfortable; perhaps we had better go away, notwithstanding the fun. At that instant, we heard

a strange, short, labored breathing from the loft stairway. We both turned,—the stairs were just outside the door,—a yellow beard showed in the dim light. True as gospel, it was Cavallius! If I live to be as old as Methusaleh, I shall never forget how terribly Massa shrieked. She shrieked as if beside herself, or as if some one had stuck a knife into her.

I did not scream, but I must own that I wasn't at all comfortable. However, this was no time for any long meditation.

Cavallius' little legs straddled over the high doorsill, and now his whole body was in the loft. There was only one door, the door by which he had entered; our "peep-hole" was the only window.

Not a word was exchanged between Massa and me, but with a common impulse, we sprang over to the trap-door in the corner through which the hay was thrown down into the stable below.

Plump! Massa was down. Plump! I was

down. Both of us landed on a big heap of hay that lay just under the trap-door.

I glanced up to see whether Cavallius were coming down the way we did, but I saw nothing of him. We rushed to the stable door, out to the Peckells' courtyard, out to the street, but not even here dared we stop. The safest place at that moment seemed to us to be the dean's garden, so in there we dashed, fastening the high garden gate after us. There! Out of danger! Massa was chalk-white with terror.

Looking through the picket fence a moment after, we saw Cavallius with more than usual dignity come out of Peckells' yard and disappear through Stiansen's gate.

But how in the world Cavallius, a perfect stranger in the town, found the way all by himself up to Peckells' hayloft that day, will always remain a mystery to me.

VIII

MADAM IGLAND'S GARDEN

MADAM IGLAND has an enormous garden with a high board fence around it. To call it a beautiful garden would be a sin and a shame. The whole place is filled with beds of carrots, parsley, cabbages, onions and such things; while at one end there is a row of currant-bushes and an old tumble-down summer-house that stands with one side on the street. Madam Igland is a market-gardener, you see, and sells vegetables to the townsfolk. However, I say wrong when I say she is a gardener, for she can't even walk, but sits all day long in a wheel-chair by the window. She has a "spy-mirror" there which reflects a part of the street she could not see otherwise.

No, it is not Madam Igland, it is Oline, who is really the gardener and the ruler over the garden. Oline is an old servant, awfully old

and with only one tooth in her mouth; but that one is frightfully long and white.

I used to think that if I were in Oline's place, I should have that tooth pulled out, for I thought that, being so very long, it must be in the way. Once I asked Oline why she didn't do that.

"No, indeed, I sha'n't do that," said Oline. "For if I hadn't that tooth, I couldn't nourish myself." Since that time I have looked at it with more respect, considering it is all that keeps Oline alive.

Oline is frightfully deaf, yet it is she who sells the garden stuff to people. All the money she gets for parsley, onions, or anything, she puts in an enormous pocket which she wears under the front of her apron.

Ola Silnes helps her in the garden. He always wears filthy white canvas trousers and jacket, has a very red face, and when he talks, grunts out something you can hardly understand from deep down in his throat.

All through the long summer day, Oline

with her bare, brown weather-beaten legs is in the carrot-bed weeding. If you want five cents' worth of onion tops, or anything, you have to go right up to her and take hold of her, for she doesn't hear a thing. But I can tell you it isn't advisable to steal into the garden when you don't want to buy anything, for that makes her fly into a rage.

The board fence isn't altogether tight at the back of the garden. There are little cracks between the boards, just big enough to stick your nose through and look in with one eye at a time; but through the cracks you can see lots of big, delicious-looking currants. O dear! There's no pleasure in standing and looking through a crack at big, juicy, red currants when you can't get any of them.

Our currants were gone long ago. Karsten eats them when they are a little red on one side, and the few that are left shrivel up in the roasting hot sun; for our garden is awfully sunny, you see. But Madam Igland's garden, being on lower ground, is always cool and

fresh, with a sweetish, spicy smell of cabbage and herbs and onion and newly-turned soil, and stiff, tall grasses in the outer corners of the garden.

I had long known that there was a loose board in the fence,—well, not entirely loose, but very shaky, you know. If you should just pull a little hard on it, it would come loose, that was certain.

One afternoon Mina and I hadn't a thing to do. We couldn't play up on the hilltop, it was so unbearably hot there. To play ball in such heat was utterly impossible; besides, Karsten had lost our best ball. The flat church steps which are so exactly suitable for playing jackstones on, and where Mina and I play almost every afternoon, were packed full of street boys who were playing with buttons.

Pshaw! There wasn't a thing for us to do. All at once, something flashed into my mind.

“Let's go down to Madam Igland's garden and see whether there are many currants there,” said I.

Mina agreed instantly.

Soon we stood with our noses through the cracks. My! so big as those currants were to-day, currants had surely never been before! And oh, how ripe! The branches were so full that they drooped right down to the ground. Ola Silnes was nowhere to be seen. Oline was in the carrot-bed weeding. On her head she had a towel, pulled far forward to keep the sun off of her face.

“Oh, Mina! Do you know there is a board loose over there?”

I went to it to show her. Yes, it was very, very shaky; almost ready to come out.

“Mina, shall we pull the board away and creep through and eat a few currants? Oline can’t hear even a gun-shot, you know.”

First a slight jerk at the board, then a longer pull; it creaked a little and we peeped in, frightened. Oline’s towed head had not moved. She was still weeding in the burning hot sun.

“Come on, now.” I was already in the gar-

den. Mina came quickly after. We ran along beside the fence, hopped through some cabbage-beds, and got behind the currant-bushes.

My, but those were currants! There were as many as fourteen on each string. How we did eat and eat! Our mouths really felt sore at last from eating so many. Now and then we peeped out at Oline, who still stayed among the carrots, weeding and weeding.

“Can you understand how she can keep on in such heat?” said Mina.

“No, I can’t; but my, haven’t we had a jolly feast? It doesn’t show a bit that any currants are gone, and think what a quantity we have eaten!”

Neither of us could eat another one.

All at once we heard a shout outside the fence and some one called, “Well, I declare! Is this where you are?”

It was Karsten. We looked anxiously along the fence, for at first we couldn’t judge where the sound came from.

“Sh! Karsten. Sh!” He was tramping

along outside the fence. Evidently he, too, knew about the loose board. He pulled it away, and was half inside the garden when—of all things!—Oline saw him.

“Out with you or I’ll make you stir your stumps, you scamp, you good-for-nothing!”

“Well, some girls are behind the currant-bushes, Oline,” shouted Karsten.

Oline didn’t hear a word he said, but she pushed him out through the hole in the fence.

“Somebody is stealing your currants,” shouted Karsten from the outside.

“Yes, you’ll catch it, you scamp.”

“Look behind the currant-bushes and you’ll see —”

“If you don’t go away and that quickly —”

We were on pins and needles, but Oline did not know what he said, of course.

There was Karsten outside the fence near where we were crouching.

“You’ll get paid for this, Inger Johanne, depend upon it. You’ll get paid. Shame on

you! I shall tell about it at home." And off he ran.

Mina and I felt that the prospect was anything but pleasant,—horrid, in fact. Ugh!

Ola Silnes came into the garden, and Oline called to him, telling about Karsten. Ola's red face looked very thoughtful. They both went to the fence and inspected the loose board very particularly. Then—who'd have thought it?—Ola Silnes, who evidently carried a lot of big nails in his pocket, took some out and with a big stone for a hammer, whack! whack! he nailed the board fast!

Mina and I stared at each other. We were in a pretty fix. We couldn't possibly get out through the gate without being seen, as long as Ola Silnes stayed in the garden. Our only hope was that he might go out on some errand.

We crouched there behind the currant-bushes and kept peeping out at Ola. Apparently he had no thought of leaving the garden. He wheeled away one wheelbarrowful of weeds after another, and emptied them out not far

from us. We sat with our hearts in our mouths each time until we saw the back of his canvas jacket. Ugh! How afraid we were that he would see us!

The time dragged on endlessly.

"Come, let's go out," said Mina almost in tears. "It's your fault. You're the one who thought of it. I can't sit here any longer, and I'm so afraid of Ola."

"Oh, wait, Mina! Sit still, just sit still a little longer."

At last, Oline seemed to have finished for the day. She put on her wooden shoes and straightened the towel on her head. Ola had nothing to arrange about his clothes, but the two stood a long time at the gate. Oline screeched higher and higher. She was talking of Karsten.

"And that boy," said Ola, "is a child out of a fine family!" He spat as far as he could just to show his scorn.

Well, they finally went. I had had a little hope that they might forget to fasten the gate.

Far from it. No such good luck for us. I heard the lock click as the key turned.

Mina and I crept out from behind the bushes. We were stiff from sitting so long in one position. It was good to stir yourself. Pooh! There wouldn't be any difficulty about getting out of the garden now, since Oline and Ola were both gone. You can always find one board or another loose in a fence. We ran along and tugged at every single board. No, they were all tight, as if they were nailed fast, as of course they were; not a single board was even a bit shaky.

Ugh! That horrid Ola Silnes, who went about with nails in his pocket! To climb over the fence was impossible for us; it was several feet higher than I was tall. What in the world could we do? If we knocked on the gate, people would come from the street and every one would have to know what we had been doing.

Once again we went around the fence. No, it was absolutely impossible to get out that way. And how hungry we were! We had cer-

tainly been in the garden for four hours. What could we eat? Not currants, no, not one more. What about carrots? Pshaw! They were too small, not bigger than my little finger; but we ate some of them, anyway, or perhaps we might have starved.

We went into the summer-house which had eight corners and a pointed roof. Such air as there was in there,—stifling hot and full of dust. The light-green paint on the walls was old and cracked; there was nothing in the room but a pile of bean-poles at one side. The windows were of colored glass.

Mina and I peeped out at the street through the red and blue and yellow panes and disputed as to which was the prettiest. What if a blood-red light such as there is when you look through red glass should come suddenly over the whole world, how awfully frightened people would be!

Really, it was rather cosy in the summer-house.

“ Suppose we should have to stay here all

night," said I. "We could lie on that heap of bean-poles and it wouldn't be so very bad, Mina."

"Oh, no! I want to get out," said Mina. The sun was now almost gone from the garden. "If you won't knock on the gate now, I will. I will not stay here any longer."

"No, no, Mina. Wait a minute." I looked anxiously about for some way of escape.

Perhaps—perhaps we could climb the pear-tree in the corner, creep carefully along the branch and jump down outside the fence; but the branches began very high up on the tree-trunk.

First we pushed Ola's wheelbarrow under the tree. O dear! Even on the wheelbarrow I couldn't reach anywhere near high enough. By the summer-house stood an old barrel; we rolled this over to the tree, and put it on top of the wheelbarrow. Mina held me and steadied me. Hurrah! There I was on the slender branch. I shoved myself along very slowly and carefully.

“If it only doesn’t break,” cried Mina.
“Oh, it is breaking, it is breaking!”

No, it didn’t break. I was soon on the fence, hung there by my arms a minute and then dropped down on the outside.

“Now you come, Mina,” I shouted.
I could hear how she tried and tried, but finally when the barrel rolled off of the wheelbarrow, she burst out crying.

“No, I can’t! I can’t climb up to that branch.”

Well there! It would have been better if Mina had climbed up first.

“Mina, don’t cry! Just wait. I’ll run and get a ladder, and be back in a jiffy.”

I dashed up the street hoping to find Karsten or some of the other boys. No, Karsten was probably out sailing and none of the others were to be seen. The ladder I had expected to get was altogether too heavy for me to carry without help. I ran back to Madam Igland’s garden.

“Mina! Mina!”



"IF IT ONLY DOESN'T BREAK!" CRIED MINA.—Page 108.

Not a sound from inside. I peeped through the cracks. No Mina was to be seen.

“Mina dear! Oh, Mina!”

No, she must certainly have got out, but how? Or perhaps she was lying in the summer-house in a faint from all the excitement. I was perfectly disgusted with myself for having left her, and ran around the garden to the gate. Far down the street I saw Mina’s blue dress. I rushed after her.

“How in the world did you get out?”

“Why, when you were gone I got so desperate because I was alone, that I banged and hammered on the gate as hard as I could; and some one went after Oline and she came and unlocked the gate.”

“Was she angry?”

“Yes, frightfully angry.”

When I reached home, Karsten had come back from his sailing and had told of seeing Mina and me behind the currant-bushes in Madam Igland’s garden, eating currants.

That he wanted to get in there himself, he said not a word about, the rascal!

Mother scolded me. It is distressing when Mother scolds; not because of what she says, exactly,—though that hurts, too,—but she looks so grieved that it makes you unspeakably sad to see her.

“And of course, Inger Johanne, you must go to Madam Igland and beg her pardon.”

When I came home from school the next day, Oline was standing in the hall. “O dear! O dear! What is coming now?” I thought. Her errand was to ask me to call at Madam Igland’s when I was passing by there.

That afternoon Mina and I went to Madam Igland’s house; through the courtyard, over the high threshold into the tiny blue-painted hall that led into her room.

“You must knock,” Mina whispered.

“No, you,” said I. Finally I had to knock at the door.

“Come in,” said a pleasant voice.

“Shall we run away?” whispered Mina.

But I had already lifted the latch, and there we were—in Madam Igland's room. I had never been in there before and the only thing I saw now was Madam Igland in her wheelchair by the window. She turned her face towards us.

“Come right in, children. Why! Is it these two nice little girls who would steal from a lame old woman's garden when that is all she has to live on?”

We began to cry, both of us.

“No, no! Don't cry. It's nothing to cry about. Come and sit here.”

“Uh-hu-hu!” sobbed Mina. “Have you nothing to live on but currants and parsley, Madam Igland?”

“Oh, I live on the money I get for them, you know.”

“We'll never, never do it again, Madam Igland,” I promised.

“No, no. You surely will not. But sit here now and talk a little with me.”

So there we sat, each on her chair and

Madam Igland in her immense wheel-chair by the window where the “ spy-mirror ” was. In her lap she had a black cat and on the windowsill sat another, blinking its green eyes.

“ Isn’t it awfully tedious to sit here all day long and only look out of the window? ” I asked when we had composed ourselves a little.

“ Oh, no! One gets used to anything. It will soon be fifteen years since the Lord took the use of my legs from me. First, I sat in the corner by the bed for twelve years, but I got very tired of that. I knew every nail-head in the floor and every dot in the wall-paper. So I moved over to the window and have sat here for three years; and it is much better.”

Think of it! She had sat in her chair much longer than I had lived! How terribly sad it was!

“ But how do you get to bed, Madam Igland? ” I asked.

“ Oh, Oline helps me. She’s a kind person, I can tell you. The good Lord sent her to me, you see. Yes, and then there are all the kind

people who come often to see me, old and lame as I am."

Only think! The good Lord had sent Oline to Madam Igland! How many queer things there are in the world! It had never occurred to me that God thought about Oline.

"Yes, she is faithful, she is faithful," said Madam Igland with a happy face, rocking herself back and forth.

Who would have supposed there was any one who rejoiced over queer old Oline?

I really liked being in there with Madam Igland.

"I ought to have something to treat you with," said Madam Igland at last. "It's a shame that I haven't anything. But you must come in again, for there will soon be some kittens here, and perhaps I may then have some good little treat for you."

I had sat and pondered over something I wanted to say, but I couldn't get it out until we were at the door.

"Madam Igland, won't you let me come in

and help you sometimes? Help you get to bed or whatever you like?"

"Oh, no, child. I am heavy, very heavy. No, the good Lord managed wonderfully well for me when He sent me Oline; and He won't forget you, who have a heart for one who is old and lame. Adieu, adieu, children."

Ever since that time, whenever we pass her house, Madam Igland nods to us and we smile and wave to her. One day she tapped on the window. The kittens had come.

IX

ON BOARD THE *SEVEN STARS*

I LOVE the sea. I know nothing else I delight in so much. Just to get the smell of seaweed, or to see the white spray dashing over a bare island, makes me happy. Poor naked hills and rocks, the salty sea air, old wharves, rocking boats, ships that have been on long voyages and are now laid up in the harbor,—all such things are the pleasantest to be found anywhere in the world. If you don't think so, you can't ever have known them, I am sure.

Sometimes I think that the sea is most beautiful in summer, when it lies like a polished mirror and the yellow seaweed sways lazily and silently against the steep gray shore; when the sun glitters out over Skagerak so that it hurts your eyes; when the sloops lie becalmed with loose sails and stay in one spot while the big steamers hurry past, bound for some foreign

land, and their smoke makes a straight black streak in the sunshine.

But when the southwest wind rushes in and puts white-caps everywhere on the sea, and the sky is so clear and so blue; and the pilot-boat with the broad red stripe in its sail seems to hop over the waves, while the boat we are rowing in rocks and bobs up and down, and our hair blows all over our faces,—oh, then I think that is the very jolliest time on the sea, after all!

In the autumn when the sea moans and roars, and the water looks black while the spray rises like great white ghosts out on the islands, the sea often seems grim and terrible; for there is always some one on the water we are afraid will not come back,—there are so many wrecks in the autumn.

One summer I was on the sea almost every day, although we had no boat of our own. Father says that if he bought us a boat we would certainly get drowned, all of us. However, I could always manage to get a boat some way.

If there were no other to be had, it was usually easy to get hold of Sorensen’s old skiff; just climb over two fences, creep around behind a little mound, and then jump right down the steep bank on to Sorensen’s wharf, where the boat is tied.

Once, however, it happened that I jumped almost on old Sorensen’s head as he stood looking out over the sea and talking to himself. Then I was in a bad fix, for he is not a person to joke with.

Another time I had just untied the boat and rowed a few strokes, when an old cracked voice called out:

“Let that skiff alone, drat you!” It was Sorensen’s, so of course I had to row back to land and tie the boat fast again, and he came down to the wharf and nearly scolded my head off,—he was so angry.

But I happened to get acquainted with his granddaughter Louisa, and then everything was as smooth as butter. It was that summer I was on the water almost every day.

The equal of Sorensen's good old rowboat I've never seen in all my days, and I've seen plenty of rowboats, I can tell you. It was pretty old and water-soaked, but for all that, it was a remarkably comfortable boat, and easy to row.

Louisa wasn't so bad, either. Bright red hair, freckled to the tips of her ears, and with white eyelashes—that's the way she looked; but search Norway over and you wouldn't find any one to match her at rowing and paddling and such things. She was lively and jolly, too, and full of all kinds of marvelous stories about mermaids and ghosts and many other queer things that had been seen on the sea. Louisa believed in these stories as if they were gospel truth.

Well, I attached myself to her that summer and fun enough we had every single day. I would take luncheon for both of us and Louisa would take the rowboat.

If her grandfather objected, we had only to promise to whittle some pitch-pine fire-

lighters for him and he would let us have the boat at once.

We would stay on the water the whole afternoon rowing out to the islands or away off in Dams bay, fishing, catching crabs and mussels, talking, laughing, and having the jolliest kind of times.

But once something frightful happened to us, and that is what I shall tell you of now.

We seldom rowed out as far as Bird Island, for the open sea was right outside of that, and there was always a heavy swell there, even when the weather was not rough.

But one afternoon we were tired of plashing around near the land and we decided that we would row out to Bird Island and just make a flying visit. Louisa knew a woman who lived in the only house on the island and it would be great fun to see how everything was out there.

A light breeze blew from the southeast, the sun was shining gaily, the skiff was as dry as a floor, for we had just emptied it; and I had

four pieces of rye cake, spread with extra good Danish butter, in my pocket.

Oh, everything was splendid! Louisa told sea stories and we bent to our oars with a will.

“Grandfather says,” announced Louisa, “that you may be all by yourself on the sea on board a schooner or a yacht or whatever, and you think that you are alone, and you are not, for the sea-spirits are with you.”

“Ugh, Louisa! that would be horrid.”

“And Grandfather says,” continued Louisa, “that they can take different forms. It may happen that one shows itself as a big flapping bird or a gray maiden. Grandfather himself has seen a spirit in the form of a cloud of fire.”

“Oh, come now, Louisa! You’re talking nonsense.”

“If it isn’t true, you may chop my head off,” said Louisa. “Grandfather was just outside of Dröbak in his yacht; it was in the middle of the night in late autumn, and all at once as he sat there, a queer shape of fire glided close to him.”

“Don’t talk of spirits, Louisa—don’t. I won’t listen any more.”

“Well, there are sea-spirits and they are ugly, too,” insisted Louisa.

It was farther to Bird Island than we had counted on, and we rowed and rowed till our arms were tired and weak with rowing so far; but at last our boat scraped against the little wharf.

Andrea’s house stood lonely and forlorn on the rocky island. It was a two-story house painted red, with big vacant windows, up-stairs and down.

“Andrea’s husband is a sailor, and I saw her and her son in town to-day with fish to sell,” said Louisa.

We went everywhere around the locked-up, forlorn house. In front was the open sea, gulls and other sea-birds flapped their wings over our heads, bare rocks and stones were everywhere.

“Really, it must be jolly to live here,—like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island,” said I.

"To do everything for yourself, live on fish and go in a boat whenever you like."

"Oh, no!" said Louisa. "No, I should be afraid to live here. Hush, keep still! Hear what a sighing comes from the sea."

A green yacht was moored down in front of the house. There was no one on board and it lay dipping slowly up and down in the swell of the sea. On the stern was painted the name of the yacht in yellow letters on a black ground,—*Seven Stars*.

"Oh, let's row out to the yacht and go on board and look it over," said I. Louisa made no objection though she said stoutly:

"But you can say what you will, there *are* spirits here on the island in the afternoons."

This was not particularly comfortable to hear just then, but I pretended not to notice it. Twenty or thirty strokes would take us to the *Seven Stars*,—not many more, at any rate.

It was difficult to climb on board, but Louisa, whose arms were very strong, pulled herself up first and drew me up after her.

Then we discovered that a frightful thing had happened. We had let go the rope to the skiff! Whether Louisa had had hold of it or I, or neither of us, I don’t know. I only know that as Louisa drew me up after her, I chanced to kick the rowboat; it glided away and in the same moment was several feet from the *Seven Stars*.

I can’t say that I was awfully afraid just then. We must be able to get hold of the boat one way or another, I thought; but it drifted farther and farther out and there we stood.

Then we began to quarrel.

“It was your fault, Louisa; you pulled me so hard.”

“Why, the idea! It was you who kicked it away.”

“But you should have held on to the rope.”

“No, you should have held it.”

The boat drifted, drifted, farther and farther away. Neither of us could swim. What in the world should we do?

Not a person on Bird Island. Not a person

on the other islands. Far, far back in the bay lay the town. Not a boat was to be seen—nothing, in fact, but gulls and sea-swallows flapping their white wings and whirling swiftly about in the air.

Louisa, with her freckled face and her white eyelashes, looked at me.

“Suppose Andrea stays in town over night at her married daughter’s,—she does that sometimes,—then no one would come here until morning.”

“But her son August will come, you know,” I said.

“Well, I’m afraid, I am,” said Louisa.

“Oh, no, Louisa, dear. We are perfectly safe here, you know.”

“But there are so many sounds, and it’s so lonely and strange, it’s uncomfortable to be here; and if there are spirits anywhere, they will be here, you may depend upon it.”

Louisa whispered the last, although we stood absolutely alone on the *Seven Stars*, alone on the wide sea.

The skiff, bobbing and rocking, had now drifted quite a distance beyond Bird Island.

“It’s drifting out to sea!” shouted Louisa, despairingly. “Oh, deliver me from Grand-father! He’ll be so angry about his boat.”

O dear! O dear! How worrisome it was! And now the sun had gone and it would soon begin to grow dark. We had not had time to look about on the yacht yet, and it seemed as if we must prepare ourselves to stay there for a while. But the doors were locked and nothing did we find on the deck but a man’s old weather-worn hat.

What should we do? Stay on the open deck all night? There was no use in shouting for help out in this solitude.

Louisa had gone to the stern, but came running back, with her eyes starting out of her head.

“Oh, Inger Johanne! Some one is groaning in the cabin!”

“What nonsense!”

“No, no, it’s true, it’s true.” Louisa was

almost beside herself. "Some one is groaning and sighing, I tell you."

We listened and yes,—think of it! A queer, heavy sound did come from the locked cabin, a strange sound, as if from the bottom of the sea, it seemed to us.

I thought Louisa had gone out of her senses, she was so afraid; for imagine! she wanted to jump overboard.

"It is the spirits," she whispered. "I'd rather jump into the sea—I will jump, I will."

I was afraid enough, but it was all very exciting, too. I kept hold of Louisa's dress.

"Don't be so stupid as to jump overboard," I said.

But at that instant fear overwhelmed me, too. Everything was so still, so unspeakably quiet, only the sound of the waves washing against the island, spurting up a little, then falling back; the wide silent sky over us, the town far, far away.

From beneath the deck, however, the strange sound came louder and louder. There really

must be something queer down there. Louisa was right—it must be sea-spirits. Fear clutched at my heart.

If only the gray maiden does not come—for she is the worst of all. Suppose a gray figure glided noiselessly up from the cabin —

We were both ready to jump overboard now. I did not know what I was doing, I was so possessed by fear. Not a boat to be seen, only the gray, boundless sea!

Oh, that horrible *Seven Stars!*

Louisa sat with both legs outside of the railing; it would not take an instant for her to jump down.

The sound from below grew louder, and it was as if some one were walking there with a slow, dragging step. We caught hold of each other's hands and stared horror-stricken at the cabin door. Some one tried to open it from the inside, turned the key—and a big tousled, carroty head peeped out.

I drew a deep sigh of relief. The head was

Singdahlsen's, crazy Singdahlsen who imagined that his legs had grown together down to his knees. He was somewhat ill-tempered and particularly ugly when he was teased. Often and often he would be on the chase after boys who had plagued him. His pursuit was not swift, however, as you can understand, since he thought he could only move his legs from the knees down.

Oh, what a relief that it was Singdahlsen and not a ghostly gray maiden! Louisa and I let go of each other's hands and went over to him.

“Was it you who sang the Columbia Song?” he asked with a threatening look.

No, indeed. We could certainly declare ourselves innocent on that score. Nothing could have been farther from our thoughts than singing.

“Well, if it had been you, I'd have hurled you into the sea, both of you.”

Singdahlsen had once been to America and ever since then the worst thing any one could

do was to sing an American song to him. He took it as a personal insult, though nobody knew why.

Pooh! We could get along with him perfectly well.

"How did you come here, Singdahlsen?" asked Louisa. Evidently she should not have asked that, for he looked angry at once.

"How did you come here on my boat?" he retorted quickly.

"It is an awfully pretty yacht, this *Seven Stars*," I said.

"Yes, when I once get it gilded over, and set a diamond as big as that (measuring with his hands) upon the mast, then it will be as it should be."

"Oh, yes! Then it will be charming," we both said.

"Really, I ought to be king of the seas," said Singdahlsen.

"Yes, you ought; and have a crown upon your head."

"No, indeed! I'll have no crown upon my

head." And there he was, as mad as a hornet again.

We kept on talking with him, though. One time he was so angry that he tramped after us around the whole deck with his legs squeezed tight together. But we were not a bit afraid of him even then, for we were so mightily glad he was not a ghost.

Our rowboat showed now only like a thin black streak far away from Bird Island. What if Louisa and I should have to stay out here on the *Seven Stars* all night with crazy Singdahlsen? It would be horrible.

Suddenly he shouted: "Up the mast with you! Both of you!"

We tried to turn his mind from that, but no, indeed; we must climb the mast, he said, or he would throw us into the sea.

"I'm sick and tired of you now, so up the mast with you, I say."

I can't deny that I began to be a little afraid of him. We tried our best to be agreeable and talked of diamonds and gold-pieces,—things

which he usually liked to talk of; but it was of no use.

“Now I shall count twelve,” said crazy Singdahlsen. “And if you are not at the top of the mast when I say twelve, out you go into the sea.”

Oh! Oh! What should we do? I cast a terrified glance over the lonely sea.—Just think! A boat was at that instant rounding the point and in it was Andrea! We knew her by the plaid kerchief on her head.

Oh, how glad, how glad we were! All fear left us at the sight of her.

“Andrea! Andrea!” we shouted. We were almost crying, the relief was so great.

Five minutes after, we were in her boat and then we did cry, cried as if we had been whipped. Andrea knew nothing one way or another, but it was plain that she believed Singdahlsen was wholly to blame.

While rowing us home, she told us that he was in her care for board and lodging; and that when she went to town with fish, she put

him on the yacht so that he should not do any mischief while she was gone.

You may well believe that Louisa's grandfather wasn't at all pleasant to meet when we went back without his rowboat. However, a pilot from Krabbesund found it and brought it home the next day; so Grandfather didn't have to worry long.

X

A MOLASSES CAKE STORY

EVERY one in our town says that Mrs. Simonsen's molasses cakes are the best in the world,—they are so thick and soft and extraordinarily tasty. Mrs. Simonsen doesn't make them herself,—Heinrich Schulze, the head baker, does that. How in the world could she ever have learned to make such good cakes? But she stands behind the counter in her shop and sells them every single day.

Mrs. Simonsen came from Telemarken. When I was a little bit of a girl she was the servant in Madam Land's house, at the foot of our hill. At that time she was Sigrid—something or other—some queer surname that I've forgotten. She had azure-blue eyes and golden hair that lay in small curly waves just as if she didn't do a thing all day in Madam Land's kitchen but crimp her hair! Sigrid

married the baker Simonsen, and he died; and ever since then Heinrich Schulze has been the head baker.

Although I had known Madam Simonsen such a long time there was no use in going into her shop without money, you may be sure; but whenever I have money, I go there and buy molasses cakes. If I have no money I go in the back way through the gate and beg from Heinrich Schulze. As a matter of fact, I go oftenest the back way.

I can always find him in the yard there. He is usually hurrying to and fro between the shop and the bakery, and often the molasses cake dough hangs over his shoulder like a long sausage. Schulze says that good molasses cake dough should be so tough that it will hang over one's shoulder without breaking. Some people think it is disgusting for him to carry the dough that way, but I don't. I even eat it raw, right from his shoulder, very often.

For Schulze and I are great friends, let me tell you. He is German, rather old and small,

has black eyes and is very wide-awake, and quick in his motions.

One day I got him to give me his photograph. On the back of the picture is written, "*Heinrich Schulze, geboren in Halle.*" So I know exactly how his name is spelled. I am delighted to have his photograph, for it is so amusing and so "grown-up" to have a good many pictures in your album. Heinrich Schulze's is the nicest one I have. He looks so free and easy, standing with his legs crossed, beside a curtain. I have an old picture of Father, and one of Grandfather, but that has his legs torn off. Then I have a picture of Mrs. Huus's little dog; I begged that from the photographer because it was so sweet. And finally I have Marie Lokke's lover. She wouldn't keep his picture any longer, because he had become engaged to another girl without her knowing anything about it; so she gave his photograph to me. These are all the pictures I have,—few enough, it seems to me,—and Schulze's is the very nicest. So you see

that is why I am so friendly with him. If we had not been such good friends, there would not have been any molasses cake story.

I know just exactly the days when he bakes molasses cakes; and on those days I hang around the door and tease and tease.

“Give me a little dough, Schulze, just a little piece, Schulze.” And he almost always gives me some.

One Thursday afternoon, (my, how vividly I remember it!) Schulze, with the dough over his shoulder, came swinging out into the back yard where I sat on a barrel waiting. It happened that I had in my hand a tiny china doll, one of those little “bath dolls” without any clothes on.

Schulze was in grand good humor that day.

“It may happen that I shall be the master of this bakery here in the town. Then Heinrich Schulze will be on top and can snap his fingers at the whole world,” said Schulze, with the dough over his shoulder and snapping his fingers in the air as he spoke. I think that

what made him so happy was that Mrs. Simonsen had been extra kind to him and he thought she would probably marry him; then he would be the master of the bakery.

I don't know how I happened to think of it, but while Schulze stood there talking, I stuck that little china doll right into the dough. Schulze didn't notice what I was doing. I smoothed over the place where I had poked the doll in and a moment after, Schulze vanished in the bake-house.

Ha, ha, ha! What fun it will be when he finds the doll in the dough! He won't be the least bit angry; he will only laugh. So I sat still on the barrel and waited, but he didn't come back.

Oh, well, he just wanted to fool me, I was sure; for of course he must have found the doll.

I stole over to the bake-house door. The molasses cakes were in the pans, ready to be put into the oven that minute.

Schulze never likes to have any one come into the bake-house, so I dared not go farther

than the door. Not a word did he say about the doll. He was surely trying to fool me into thinking he had not found it. Suddenly I remembered that I had not studied my lessons; so I at once started on a run for home.

That whole evening I laughed to myself every time I thought of the doll in the cake-dough. I would get the little thing back from Schulze in the morning. But he said not a word about it then, either; nor was he the least bit roguish or joky.

Suppose he hadn't found the doll! Suppose it was baked in a cake and sold, and should get into some one's stomach and the person should die of it!

That was a dreadful thought, and I grew so frightened, oh! so frightened; but I didn't dare say a word to any one about it. Mrs. Simonsen and Schulze would both be furious, and perhaps some one in the town was dying to-day—it might be just now—some one dying from that molasses cake with my little china doll in it!

Oh, how I did suffer that day! I begged Father for twenty *øre* and spent it all on molasses cakes, for perhaps the little doll might be in one of those I bought. No such good luck. I ate so many molasses cakes, I got perfectly sick of them; I ate them with despair in my heart.

At last I stationed myself beside the steps of Mrs. Simonsen's shop and stared at every one who came out who had bought molasses cakes. "Perhaps it is you who will get the doll in your stomach,—or perhaps it is you," I kept thinking. But if it had been to save my life, I could not have said anything to them even though I was so worried.

When children bought the cakes, however, I took their cakes without any ceremony and squeezed them to find out whether the doll was inside. No, I did not find it.

At last I was really sick, I was so anxious. Several times I was on the point of going in and telling Mrs. Simonsen; but it would be so difficult and so frightfully embarrassing.

Anyway, I couldn't muster up courage enough to do it.

The day dragged on. At night I dreamed of the doll in the cake and in the afternoon when I came from school, I sat again on the steps of the bakery. Mrs. Simonsen stood in the doorway, sunning herself.

"It is warm and pleasant these days," said Mrs. Simonsen.

Yes, I, too, thought it was warm. Indeed, I broke into a perspiration whenever I thought of the molasses cake with the doll in it.

"Why, true as you live, if there isn't the Collector of the Port himself coming here," exclaimed Mrs. Simonsen. "He's even coming into the shop, I declare! Go away from the steps, child."

Yes, it was really the old Collector himself, with his keen face, his bent back and his cap with broad gold braid on it. He stopped beside the steps, stuck his cane between the paving-stones and looked up at Mrs. Simonsen in the doorway.

“Is this Mrs. Simonsen who sells molasses cakes?”

Mrs. Simonsen curtsied.

“Yes, your honor,” she answered, respectfully.

The old wooden steps creaked under the Collector’s heavy tread. Now he was in the shop. I peeped in at the door.

“May I then ask you, my good woman,” continued the Collector, “what you call this?”

He searched in one vest pocket, searched a long time,—searched in the other vest pocket; then oh! wonder of wonders! Between his crooked thumb and big pointer finger, he held high in the air my little china doll!

The instant I saw it, I was awfully, awfully glad, for now I knew that no one had swallowed it, that it wasn’t lying in any one’s stomach causing pain if not death.

“What do you call this?” repeated the Collector, staring in a terrifying way at Mrs. Simonsen from under his bushy eyebrows.

There was utter vacancy in Mrs. Simonsen’s

sky-blue eyes as she looked from the doll to the Collector and from the Collector to the doll. He had to ask her three times before she answered.

“That—that is a—a doll,” said Mrs. Simonsen at last, so frightened that she was ready to sink to the floor.

“Yes, perfectly true—a doll. But then may I ask what a doll has to do in my molasses cake? What has it to do there, I ask you?”

“In your molasses cake?” exclaimed Mrs. Simonsen in the utmost astonishment. It seemed, however, as if she were a little braver now that the talk came to molasses cakes. There she felt herself surer.

“Yes, right in the molasses cake,” snapped the Collector. “I sat drinking my coffee and eating my cake, when I suddenly felt something sc-r-runch between my teeth. I came within a hair’s breadth of getting it in my throat and choking to death,—giving up the ghost instanter; and that molasses cake came from you,” concluded the Collector, putting

his silver-mounted cane right against Mrs. Simonsen's breast as if it were a pistol.

"Has the Collector found a doll in his molasses cake?" cried Mrs. Simonsen in dismay.

"Exactly, my much respected Mrs. Simonsen,—a doll in my molasses cake."

Then there was a great to-do! Schulze was called from the bake-house and in his baker's cap and apron stood there talking German and insisting that he knew nothing about the doll. The Collector scolded and fumed, and Mrs. Simonsen never got any further than to say, "But, your honor, your esteemed highness —" before the Collector interrupted her:

"Keep still, I say. It is I who will talk."

Oh, how frightened I was! Several times I was about to spring in and say that the doll was mine and that it was I who had put it in the dough; but I didn't dare.

"I will just give you notice, my good woman, that hereafter no cakes for me shall be purchased here;" and the Collector struck his

cane on the floor many times with great emphasis.

When he said that, I felt so sorry for Mrs. Simonsen and nice kind Heinrich Schulze that before I knew it, I was in the bakery.

“Oh, it was I who did it! It was I who put the doll into the dough,—just for fun,—just for a joke on Schulze. Oh, I have been so sorry about it—uh, hu, hu!” I threw myself down across the counter and lay there, crying and sobbing; but it was a relief to have told at last.

“Well, I must say!” exclaimed the Collector, but his tone and manner had changed. “Is it here we have the sinner? And you did that for fun? for *fun*? ”

“Yes, I thought Schulze would find it right away,” I sobbed.

“Whose child are you?” asked the Collector. I told him through all my tears and without raising my head from the counter.

“H’m, h’m.” The Collector cleared his throat. “Well, well. Let it pass, my good

Mrs. Simonsen. I shall, after all, continue to buy my molasses cakes here; they are exactly to my taste. And you, child,"—he tapped my head with the silver head of his cane,—“you must find some other kind of fun than putting dolls into molasses cakes for people to choke on.” With that the Collector stamped heavily out of the shop.

Mrs. Simonsen was angry with me and so was Schulze; but I was so glad to have the doll in my hands again, so glad that no one had died from it, and that I had eased my conscience by confessing,—oh, I can’t express how glad I was!

“Please don’t be angry. I did it just for a joke, you know. I will never, never do anything like that again. No, indeed, indeed I will not.”

But what do you think? Somehow, since that time, I don’t feel like going as often as I used to into Mrs. Simonsen’s shop or into the back yard to see Schulze; and I scarcely ever get a bit of molasses-cake dough any more.

I was perfectly disgusted that my splendid joke should have turned out not to be funny at all; but the doll that was baked in a molasses cake and all but swallowed by the Collector of the Port, I still treasure.

XI

MADAM KNOLL'S TORTOISE

UP in the attic of Lindquist, the tailor, lives a comical person, Madam Knoll. She is big and broad and very rheumatic, but she laughs at almost everything, although she can get angry enough, too, as you shall hear.

But my, how Madam Knoll can laugh! She shakes all over and makes scarcely a sound except a couple of hoarse cackles at the last when her breath gives out. It is rather alarming until she catches her breath again and hurries on with her talk just where she left off.

For Madam Knoll can talk, too, I assure you. She says that because she is alone so much, words get all tangled up for her and she forgets how to use speech; but I've never noticed this, not yet, at any rate.

“Uf!” says Madam Knoll when I go to see her. “I’ve had no one to speak to all day

and I'm perishing for talk; it is good to have you come."

To tell the truth, I go up there because there is so much to amuse myself with. In the first place, Madam Knoll has a toy shop. Two great wide tables are packed full of all kinds of toys. On the walls hang jumping-jacks and red-cheeked dolls that shine and simper in the sun; and from the ceiling hang small bird-cages and brownies and every such thing that can in any way be made to hang from a ceiling. I am allowed to go about and play with anything and everything. I wind up the music-boxes till our ears ring with opera melodies. I wind the tops, too, and get a whole crowd of them spinning on the floor at once. Oh, there is plenty of fun to be had up in Madam Knoll's attic room, I assure you. And Madam Knoll sits on the little platform beside the window, singing in a quavering voice and sewing on shirts, for she sells them as well as toys.

However, few customers climb the steep stairs up to Madam Knoll's room. Many days

can pass when I am the only customer, and of course, I never buy anything.

Madam Knoll had married a Danish glazier, but the name, Knoll, had always been a thorn in the flesh to her, so, all of her own accord, she began to call herself Madam Hansen, for she thought Hansen an extremely pretty name. On one side of the tailor's front door there is a green sign with white letters which says:

“SHIRTS MADE AT ANY TIME BY MADAM
HANSEN”

and on the other side of the entrance:

“NEWEST TOYS FOR SALE. MADAM
HANSEN”

People read the signs, then go in and ask for Madam Knoll.

It is not true that the newest toys are to be bought at her shop, though; for, between you and me, she never buys any new ones.

“I should be pretty stupid if I bought new

things before I had sold out the old ones," says Madam Knoll. But it is stupid of her not to, I think.

Well, besides the toys there is the big tortoise. That was brought home by a sailor many years ago, and has now crept and crawled over Madam Knoll's floor for at least ten years. It is slow and clumsy about turning around, but it has lively little black eyes. Sometimes when I sit and look at the tortoise I think how dreadful for it just to crawl about in the half-darkness between the chair legs when it had been used to glorious sunshine and soft warm white sand and sea-water thoroughly warmed by the sun, down on the coast of Guinea where it came from.

But Madam Knoll does not like me to say that the tortoise does not enjoy itself with her.

"I should be thankful, if I were a tortoise, to walk about in quietness on a clean, scoured floor, instead of being swallowed by a shark or roasted by the sun," says Madam Knoll. But I am not sure that the tortoise would have

the same opinion as she about its home. However, Madam Knoll takes great pleasure in the tortoise. "Its eyes are so much like my man Knoll's eyes," she says.

Lindquist, the tailor, owns the house and lives on the first floor. He has one son, Kalle, an idle good-for-nothing boy who has a great habit of sitting on the stairs leading to Madam Knoll's room; and on that account, she and Kalle live in continual warfare. She says that he keeps customers away, because he is always sitting on her stairs. Time after time she limps to the hallway and peers down to see whether he is there. She keeps an old broom in the corner just to have something at hand to thump Kalle's head with if he won't go off her stairs.

"Now be a good boy, Kalle," says Madam Knoll, holding the broom behind her, "and go away when I tell you to."

"No," says Kalle from the stairs.

"Are you defying me, you impudent lazy-bones? Go away—and that quickly." A

warning thump with the broom on Kalle's head. "Do you think it is any help to me to have you sit there?" Thump, thump. "Do you think folk will take the trouble to jam themselves against the wall past you when they want to come up to do some business with an old friend?" A heavy thump on Kalle's red head.

"No," says Kalle, not stirring.

"Well, then, I shall knock on the floor for your father." Since Madam Knoll has had the rheumatism, it hurts her to go up and down stairs, so she calls Lindquist that way. He knows well what it means, darts out to the stairs and hauls Kalle by force into his room. This happens quite often, but really not many more customers come to Madam Knoll when Kalle isn't sitting on the stairs than when he is.

Madam Knoll has lived in the tailor's attic for seventeen years. She has thought of giving up her lodging every day in all these years, she says; but there is one thing that keeps her from moving, and that is that nowhere in the

whole town could she find such a good warm floor for her own feet and for the tortoise's, because Lindquist keeps a good fire both summer and winter to heat his irons for pressing.

One day, to my great astonishment, I met Madam Knoll and Policeman Weiby away up in Grand Street. Madam Knoll, you see, almost never goes down-stairs, even. Her face was as red as a boiled lobster and she talked incessantly as she limped along. Policeman Weiby's under lip stuck out, and he toddled beside her with short mincing steps, for he's an old man. Naturally, I joined them at once.

"They have stolen my tortoise," said Madam Knoll. "Oh, that beautiful, poor, dear creature!"

"Who stole it?" I asked.

"Well, if I knew that," said Madam Knoll angrily, "I shouldn't have needed to get a policeman. Haven't I walked with my bad legs all the way over here after Weiby?"

When we arrived at the house Weiby searched the whole attic, poked his cane under

the bed and the commode and shook the mat the tortoise usually lay on.

“I’ve done all that myself,” said Madam Knoll angrier than ever.

“Yes, the turtle is gone,” said Weiby.

“Turtle!” said Madam Knoll, so indignant that she could scarcely get the word out.

“We must advertise it,” said Weiby.

“Advertise? Much good that would do!” sniffed Madam Knoll.

“What did you call the police for, Madam Knoll, if you won’t do what he says?” Weiby was angry, too, now.

“Call me Madam Hansen, as my name is,” said Madam Knoll. “However, you may as well go. I can see that you would never find the tortoise if you stumbled over it.” And now she and the policeman were decidedly at loggerheads.

The end was that Weiby stamped down the stairs promising that it would be a long time before he would come there again.

“What is such a man good for?” said

Madam Knoll. “ Shake the mat and look under the bed as if he had thought of something brand-new, when he might know that I had done all that; he’d never find my tortoise, not if he walked on his head all over town, I could see that by his whole make-up. Oh, the poor lost tortoise! Do you think that whoever has taken it knows that it has four raisins every day,—uh, hu, hu!—and a carrot? Well, I’ll say this,” concluded Madam Knoll, drying her eyes; “ if you find the tortoise, you shall have the music-box that plays, ‘ Bim bam! Bilibum, bum, bum,’ and my thanks besides.”

Oh-h! Wonder of wonders! That charming music-box for my own!

And so began the time when I hunted for the tortoise. It was really great fun, you know,—exactly as if I were a detective; though people said I would never make a detective, for I was too indiscreet and talked too much.

My! The places I went to, to inquire about that tortoise! Into yards and barns and sheds of all sorts, down in the town, and up on the

hill; and I talked with every man, woman and child about the lost tortoise. But no. No one had seen anything a bit like such a creature.

“ Well? ” Madam Knoll would say questioningly, looking over her spectacles, the minute I opened the door. “ Have you found any trace of my dear, beautiful tortoise? ”

It began to look as if there were little hope of my getting the music-box that played, “ Bim bam! Bilibum, bum, bum.”

Eight days had passed since the tortoise had disappeared. Shame on me, I scarcely thought of it any more; but a person can’t go on thinking of one thing forever.

One day, though, when I went home from school, past the cemetery, I suddenly wanted awfully to play hop-scotch on Peter Bertzen’s gravestone, it is so remarkably flat and broad, just the thing for hop-scotch. While I was hopping there, something moved among the barberry-bushes over by the stone wall. When I went to find out what it was, I saw Kalle Lindquist squatting on the ground, handling



“KALLE, YOU RASCAL!” I SAID, GRABBING HIM BY THE HAIR.
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something. I crept softly up to him—and just think! It was the tortoise! It had been lying in the stone wall, I could see, for Kalle had taken out some stones from there.

“Kalle, you rascal!” I said, grabbing him by the hair.

“Let me go! Let me go!” screamed Kalle. But I had no idea of doing that until I had got the tortoise from him.

The tortoise was dead; I saw that instantly. The little black eyes usually so lively were half-shut and dim.

“Oh, you cruel Kalle!” I said. “You put the poor thing in the stone wall and let it starve to death. You’d better look out for Madam Knoll. You’ll catch it from her!”

Kalle only laughed and dug in the dirt with a stick.

I took the tortoise in my apron and ran full gallop to Madam Knoll’s. I forgot my school-books altogether and left them in their strap on Peter Bertzen’s gravestone.

“Well?” said Madam Knoll as usual, look-

ing over her spectacles as soon as I appeared at the door.

I was so out of breath that I couldn't speak; I just showed her what I had in my apron.

Madam Knoll struck her hands together, but when she saw that the tortoise was dead, she began to cry.

"It was Kalle who took it," said I.

"Kalle!" shouted Madam Knoll. "Give me the broom!" she shouted even louder.

When she got the broom, she pounded on the floor and called "Lindquist!" so that people heard her far up the street. Lindquist came hastily up, his tailor's sewing-ring on his finger and holding a needle with a long thread trailing from it. He must have thought that the house was on fire, he looked so frightened.

"See here!" said Madam Knoll in a quivering voice. "See here what your bad boy has done." She laid the tortoise on its back and presented it to him in that manner, so that Lindquist should see at once how dead it was.

"What—what does this mean?" asked Lindquist, bewildered.

“Mean?” cried Madam Knoll. “It means that I shall move from here to-morrow, Lindquist, understand that. It means that your son has killed my tortoise.”

Madam Knoll talked louder and louder as she threatened Lindquist with both the police and the Parliament. Lindquist was utterly unable to make himself heard when he tried to speak, for Madam Knoll entirely out-talked him. My, but there was a hullabaloo in her attic that day!

But Madam Knoll did not move from his house as she had threatened to, after all, for she lives there even now.

Although the tortoise was dead when I found it, I got the music-box, nevertheless. It stands beside my bed. In the mornings everything has to go in such a tearing hurry that I have no time to think of music-boxes; but every night when I undress, I wind it up and then fall asleep while it plays, oh, so delicately and prettily, “Bim, bam! Bilibum, bum, bum!”

XII

PLAY ACTING

OH, I am so angry with Otto, the wood-cutter! for it was all his fault. Just because he was cross over Father's having bought so much green wood, he had to — Well, I'm going to tell you all about it.

A better theater than our woodshed is not to be found in the whole town. Emil Rasmussen's hall, where all the traveling actors play, can't come up to our woodshed, that is certain. Of course I mean in the summer when there isn't any wood there.

The little platform over in the corner, where the heavy old baby-carriage stands and old boxes and all the other rubbish, is the most magnificent stage any one could wish; and the long, narrow woodshed is a fine place for the spectators. There is also a dressing-room for the actors in the old carriage-house. True, you have to creep through a hole rather high up in

the wall to get in there from the woodshed, but that is a small matter. What is worse is that a box of red ochre stands right under the hole and there's always danger of falling into it. Except for that the carriage-house is a capital dressing-room.

There are no windows in the woodshed. When we shut the door, the only light is what comes through cracks and holes and sifts down between the tiles in the roof; but there are so many cracks and openings that there is more than enough light, anyway.

All the year round, Otto, the woodcutter, stands in the woodshed with sawdust in his hair and chops and saws with his rough purplish hands.

I often sit on a chopping-block near him and tell him fairy tales that I invent myself. Little reward do I get for my trouble, for Otto says never a word about my stories, though I make them as exciting as ever I can.

Well, once we girls decided that we would act a play.

“ Warburg’s Company ” had just been in town and played “ Cousin Lottie ” and “ Adventures on a Walking Tour.” We had had free tickets every evening and I had sat in the front row and been in the seventh heaven of ecstasy.

Oh, you should have seen Warburg! Such eyes! Such a beautiful nose! And he spoke so charmingly! All the girls in our class went to the wharf to see him off when he left town, and Karen Jensen cried because she would not see him any more. She will not own up now that she cried, but I distinctly saw tears shining in her eyes.

It was when we went home from the wharf that time, that we decided we would act a play. There were Massa, Mina, Karen, Lolla, and I. We should need Karsten, but not any of the other boys,—they are all so disgusting nowadays. They whistle through keys and laugh and whisper when we go past them, and I call such behavior disgusting.

But we must have Karsten, because he sings

so charmingly. His voice is so clear, so clear! When he sings:

“*Ja, vi elsker dette landet*,”¹

it always makes the shivers go down my back; and old Miss Weyergang says that is a sign of the “highest artistic enjoyment” any one can have. Miss Weyergang was in Berlin once and heard “Lucca” sing, and she felt as if one pail of cold water after another were emptied over her; and nothing could have been more delightful, Miss Weyergang says.

So we must have Karsten. I can’t sing a bit. When I try to take a high note, there comes out the queerest sound. It is like the noise Karsten makes when I have shut him in the big empty meal-chest, and he screeches so frightfully from inside there.

But if you imagine Karsten is willing to help us with our performance, you make a great mistake.

“Do you think I will come and play with you girls? Be the only boy? No, thank you.

¹ National Song of Norway. (“Yes, we love this land.”)

Perhaps you can get such a girl-boy as Peter, the dean's son, to do that, but not me. Very likely you'd dress me up as you used to when I was little. Humph! No, indeed. I'm a chap who has outgrown all that sort of thing."

Well, this was going to cost us dear. To try to force Karsten would be of no use. We must coax him.

"If you will be in our theatricals, Karsten, I'll rip off the two big buttons from the back of my winter coat and give them to you; crocheted buttons, you know."

"We-ell, you'll have to give me the two that are on the front of the coat, too."

"Yes, yes; but then you must sing four times,—once for each button."

Karsten grumbled a little at this, but Massa promised him a cornucopia full of plums from their shop, and so he gave in.

At school the next day, off in a corner of the class-room, we wrote the program. All the other girls crowded about us, wishing to know what the secret was. Massa and I stood in

front and pushed them away, while behind us Mina and Karen wrote as fast as they could on the program. Such an excitement!

The principal came to the door, displeased at the noise; and Anna Brynildsen went and tattled, saying that I had pulled Kima Pirk's hair. Well, it was true that I had clutched Kima by that red-brown hair of hers, but it was purely in self-defense, for Kima is much stronger than I.

At last the program was all written out. Here it is:

**FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE
GIOJA COMPANY
IN THE JUDGE's WOODSHED**

Saturday, the 12th

1. *Ja, vi elsker* - Sung by Young Gioja
(That was Karsten.)
2. Declamation - - Miss Ella Gioja
(That was I.)
3. The Play, "Cousin Lottie." Freely rendered from memory. By the whole Gioja Company.

4. "The Wild Duck Swims in Silence,"
Young Gioja

5. Perhaps two extra numbers.

Entrance fee: What you please, but not less than one *öre* for each person.

It was certainly a magnificent program and a great deal for the money. In the next recess we put the program up on the wall so that every one could see it. They all said they would come.

Right after dinner on Saturday Mina and I cleared up the woodshed. You may well believe we worked hard. Chopping-blocks, boards, shavings, axes, and saws,—away into the corners with them all. We swept and swept and arranged and rearranged; but we made it look awfully nice, you may depend upon that.

We wouldn't try to have scenery or "wings." To fix up such theater contrivances is tremendously troublesome. No, we could creep in and out of the hole in the wall; that was much more convenient.

When it came to the point, Karsten was determined that he would not dress in costume, and of course he must, or it wouldn't be like a real theater.

More coaxing of Karsten, a promise of another button from my winter coat, and a very rare Rio Janeiro stamp,—and at last he yielded. We took off his jacket, put a red scarf over one shoulder, slanting down to his waist, and set an old peaked felt hat on his head. His face was awfully red and angry,—he hated the whole thing, you see,—but he couldn't resist that rare Rio Janeiro stamp.

Now the spectators began to come. We peeped through the hole to see them, and my goodness! how quickly the woodshed was filled! Pshaw! There were the boys, Nils and Anton and Ezekiel and all. Ugh! Massa stood at the door and took the money and I saw her shove some boys out who were trying to get in without paying.

It was five o'clock, the time for the performance to begin.

I rang a little cow-bell and Karsten crept through the hole in the wall in full costume. I followed him with an accordion for I was to play an accompaniment, you see. I can't play the accordion very well but I hoped I might get along all right, nevertheless.

"*Ja, vi elsker,*" began Karsten, and I accompanied him as well as I could but he sang faster than I played, so I kept several notes behind him.

"You're playing wrong," said Karsten, stopping short in the song.

"I'm not, either. We'll soon get together. You just keep on singing."

We went at it again.

"If you can't play properly I won't sing any more," said Karsten after a few more notes.

"Oh, you horrid thing! Keep on singing. I'll catch up."

But Karsten sprang at me and thumped me over the head two or three times. I grabbed him by both ears but he wrenched himself

away. There was a roar of laughter throughout the whole woodshed, and the boys shouted, "Bravo! Bravo!"

O pshaw!

Karsten had already clambered back through the hole. I saw only his legs when I turned around. Under the circumstances, there was nothing for me to do but to creep after him.

In the woodshed, the spectators whistled through their fingers, shouted and screeched. After draping a black shawl over my head I again made my entrée in as dignified a manner as was possible through the hole.

Until the very moment I stepped forward on the stage, I was in the most horrible uncertainty as to what I should recite. It was impossible for me to decide whether it should be "*Terje Vigen*," or "The Church Clock in Farum," or "Little squirrel sat," or what. The room was now still as death.

"Ahem! h'm!" I kept clearing my throat.

O dear me! Which poem *should* I choose?

But of all things in the world! There, at the woodshed door, stood Otto, the woodcutter, looking frightfully cross.

“What’s all this?” he called in a rough, angry voice.

I saw danger ahead, and spoke from the stage as mildly and soothingly as I could.

“This is a theater, Otto. We’re acting—having awfully good fun.” Almost before I had finished speaking, the spectators shouted in chorus:

“Theater, Otto! Theater!” and rushed at him, snatching at his jacket from behind, while Nils set up a blood-curdling Indian howl, such as only he can give; and everything was in a hullabaloo in no time.

Suddenly I saw Otto stride over to a heap of wood in the corner and grab a stick.

“Such trash! Such foolishness!” he shouted, swinging the stick in the air. “There must be a stop put to this, I tell you! Such goings on in a regular woodshed! Out with you!” He was like a furious savage.

“Look out! He harms people when he is so angry,” shouted Karsten from the hole.

All the spectators ran for the door, tumbling and scrambling over each other. I retired as hastily as possible through the hole, and darted out of the carriage-house door; and up the hill sprang spectators and actors in a wild rush.

All the rest of the day Otto went rummaging and ransacking around in the woodshed and scolding over wicked children, the foolishness of the world, and the misery of having green wood to cut up.

He was in a bad humor over the affair the whole summer, and will surely never forget it.

The next day at school, all the spectators came to us and wanted their money back. I thought that was mean, but, anyway, they didn’t get it; for of course we had immediately spent it on lemon-drops.

XIII

A DAY AT SCHOOL

SOMETIMES it is rather pleasant to go to school; a little tedious, oh yes, but often jolly good fun.

What makes it horrid is that one has to go to school in all kinds of weather. When there is sunshine and such fresh, crisp, clear air that it tingles through your whole body even to your finger-tips, and you have to go to school and sit there three, four, five hours, then **I** really think it is disgusting. Yes, **I** allow myself to say that then it truly is disgusting.

But when there is a drizzling rain and **I** know my lessons, it is not so bad to go to school, after all. **I** almost always know my lessons, for that matter. When **I** study them twice over and then shut my eyes and hear myself, **I** know them. When there is something very difficult in our "History of the World," such as the French Revolution, the Legisla-

tive Assembly, the Representative Assembly, and all that, why, then I have to study the lesson over three times.

I am at the head of the class, and always have been, as far back as I can remember. So the other girls plague me to translate for them till I am often bored. I scarcely get inside the class-room door in the mornings before they rush at me, each with her book in her hand, and draw me to a window or a corner to translate the German lesson or the English lesson for them.

There is only one girl that I am afraid might get above me in the class and take my place away from me. That is Anna Brynildsen. From the moment she came into the school, and being a new pupil was put at the foot of the class, I have been afraid of her, because people said she was frightfully clever. She has already crept up so that her seat is the second from the head.

There is something awfully exasperating to me about Anna Brynildsen. I don't like her

looks, I don't like her clothes or anything. Antoinette Wium says I'd like her better if she weren't so clever. Well, I *don't* like the glib way she recites, as if everything were as easy as A B C; and that self-satisfied look she wears is enough to exasperate any one, I think. She almost never talks but when she does say anything, every word is so sensible that she might as well be eighty years old.

Ugh! that Anna Brynildsen!

Now I will tell you how a day at school goes with us. One only time in all my life have I cheated at school, and it is that particular day I am going to tell about.

I must begin at the beginning, and that is old Ingeborg who cleans the schoolroom, wipes up the dust, puts wood in the stove, and so on. But old Ingeborg is so old that she can't see the dust, and when we come to school it is lying thick everywhere. That is why I began to do the dusting.

In the first hour, we always have a student from a Normal School, Mr. Bu, as teacher.

Did you ever hear such a name? But he is not half bad, Mr. Bu; he is exceedingly kind. You see, very often I don't get the dusting and arranging done in time, but he doesn't say anything if I, once in a while, keep on dusting after the lesson begins.

"It is absolutely necessary, Mr. Bu," I say.

And it really is. All the desks, the window-sills, the maps, even up on the platform around Mr. Bu's elbows on his desk, I have to dust. It was only once I did that, however.

At recess I clean the ink-wells. I think it is fun to do such things. Sometimes I dust the ledges of the logs that make the walls, so that the dusting shall last as long as possible; for it is much pleasanter to go about dusting than to sit still at your desk.

Well, it was one summer day just before vacation. Such sunshine you never saw. The sea was one mass of sparkles; two or three mackerel boats lay outside the islands. Oh, to row out there now, to sit in the boat and dabble in the blue-green water, to land on

Marcussen's Island, and run up on the hill there and shout and play and enjoy yourself!

But no. I must go to school; and I didn't know a word of my lesson which was about Olaf Kyrre. I had been certain the evening before that I should have time to study my "History of Norway" in the morning; but let me tell you, it isn't safe to depend on time ahead that way. There wasn't a minute. I had to dash down the hill through the dean's garden to get to school in time, and even then I only just got there before the bell rang.

The dust lay thick everywhere. It was highly necessary for me to be on hand, that was evident. But would you believe it? Antoinette Wium had taken it upon herself to begin to put the room in order and manage things; but she soon found out her mistake.

"No, Miss," said I. "Be so good as to sit down. It is I who shall do this. Do you suppose Mr. Bu wants so much confusion here? Be so good as to take your seat and keep quiet."

So Antoinette had to go back to her desk. Mr. Bu said nothing but I could see plainly that he agreed with me. Of course there should be order and quiet in the class-room.

Mr. Bu is rather queer, however. When the weather is fine, he leans out of the window the whole lesson hour, asks the questions out in the air and we answer from where we sit, back in the room. We get awfully lively, you may be sure, but when there is too much noise behind him, he comes in from the window, very angry.

“You’ll get marked for this; you’ll get marked for such behavior,” he says, shaking his forefinger at us and glaring fiercely around the class-room. But we know very well that he won’t give us any marks, for Mr. Bu is after all very easy-going.

Antoinette Wium was highly offended with me because I would not allow her to attend to the class-room. While Mr. Bu was hanging out of the window, a ball of paper hit me suddenly on the head. On the inside of the paper was written:

“There ought to be a limit to self-conceit as well as to other things. You are the most conceited person in the whole world, Inger Johanne High-and-Mighty. Mother says so, too.”

Pooh! That fat Mrs. Wium who goes through the streets with her market-basket, and the neck of her dress unfastened! As if I cared the least bit for her. I wrote a note in reply immediately:

“Whether your mother likes me or not is for me a bagatelle.”

I really must ask if you don’t think that that was well said?

The bell rang, Mr. Bu came in from the window, assigned our new lesson and the class was dismissed.

Well, that was good. In this recess I must learn what I could about Olaf Kyrre, for I didn’t know the least speck about him. But there was no studying for me, I assure you, for the instant Mr. Bu shut the door, Antoi-

nette came at me, angry as could be because I had called her mother a bagatelle, she said.

“It may easily be that your mother is a bagatelle,” said I. “But I never called her that.”

“Yes, you did,” said Antoinette.

“No, I didn’t,” said I.

We kept on disputing that way the whole recess. I held my “History of Norway” in my hand but didn’t get a chance to see a word in it.

Pshaw! Now we must have arithmetic. There stood Mr. Holmesland at the door.

“Mental arithmetic! Mental arithmetic!” shouted the class. “Let us have mental arithmetic.”

Mr. Holmesland is a stout man with sleepy-looking eyes and a reddish beard. He said never a word, but walked up to his desk and sat down with his hand under his cheek as usual.

“Written arithmetic,” he said emphatically when he was well settled.

“Oh, no, Mr. Holmesland! Mental arithmetic, mental —”

“When I was outside the door,” said Mr. Holmesland, “I thought that we should have mental arithmetic to-day, but since you shouted and screamed so, I decided that you should not have it.”

A grumbling murmur came from all the desks.

“Written arithmetic,” said Mr. Holmesland again. His water-blue eyes looked as if they would shut any minute.

As far as I am concerned, it is absolutely the same whether it is mental or written arithmetic, for I am equally poor in both.

Isn’t it remarkable that I cannot do anything with numbers? Just think, I believe it would be perfectly impossible for me to do a “rule of three” example correctly! How I shall manage when I come to higher mathematics I can’t imagine, especially if we have Mr. Holmesland. He only looks heavily down at you and lets it go, and one can’t learn

a great deal that way. At any rate I can't, I'm sure of that. But the most elaborate and difficult problems in arithmetic are just "rat for cat" to Anna Brynildsen. She gets every one correct to the last dot. That's the kind of head she has.

When she goes up to Mr. Holmesland's desk, gets "Correct" on all her examples, and comes down again with that unspeakably self-satisfied look of hers, she is so exasperating to me that I feel like flying right at her and knocking her over. My! Suppose I should do it some day!

I worked out four examples that hour. One I really thought was right, but the others I had no hope of.

"Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong," said Mr. Holmesland, as he drew a heavy mark through them all.

Pshaw!

"You are most remarkably incapable as an arithmetician," said Mr. Holmesland. "I believe if any one asked you how many eyes you

had, you would make a mistake in counting them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the pupils at their desks, Anna Brynildsen with them—she who seldom laughs at anything. She laughed so exasperatingly, too, keeping her mouth tight shut, and not making any sound except "h'm, h'm, h'm."

At last the bell rang and I rushed around opening windows. Fresh air I must have.

Anna Brynildsen took up her lunch-box and began to eat her sandwiches, made with sausage. She spends the whole recess eating.

This was the time to study my history lesson; but as I threw open the farthest window, the one that looks out on a little grassy place, I suddenly had an irresistible desire to jump out into that green grass. Although our classroom is on the first floor, it is quite far from the ground, because the foundation of the building is so high. Massa wanted to jump out, too, so out we went, I with my history book in my hand. Thump, thump! It was

lots of fun. Other girls jumped out after us, thump, thump, thump!

Anna Brynildsen was the only one of the class who didn't jump out. She stood at the window eating her bread and sausage.

We stormed back into the room, out of the window again, every one of us. What uproarious fun we had!

And then, my gracious, if recess wasn't over!

Ugh! Olaf Kyrre. I read hastily as we went into the class-room. Mr. Juul, who teaches our history class, was already there. Such a beautiful nose as he has! It could be a model for a sculptor, it is so finely shaped.

Mr. Juul swung himself up to his chair on the platform.

“Close the windows,” he said.

“Oh, Mr. Juul! Let us have one open; just one!”

“Close the windows, I say.”

Pshaw! We have to sit as if in a box with the lid on when Mr. Juul has the class.

Now for the lesson. How in the world should I get along when I didn't know anything at all about him,—that bothersome old Olaf Kyrre.

I had a faint hope that Mr. Juul might forget to call on me. I wouldn't even look at him for fear that might remind him of me; and I made myself as small as possible and sat as still as a stone.

“Kima Pirk, please begin.”

Kima stood up and began to rattle off something. She almost never knows the lesson, but when she is called upon to recite, she swallows and mutters and stutters and uses her mouth so queerly that it is almost impossible to understand anything she says.

For once, I was glad to hear her. Mr. Juul always calls on us in regular order, and since he had begun with Kima, who sat at the farthest end of the class from me, I should escape.

Oh, what a relief!—that I should not be called upon to recite.

Kima sputtered and stammered. Mean-

while I made a beautiful chicken out of paper, under my desk.

“What kind of a king was Olaf Kyrre?—Inger Johanne.”

I jumped up.

“He was—he was very bloodthirsty.”

“Is that so?”

“Oh, no,—he was very brave—only a little bloodthirsty.”

Mr. Juul went over to the window to get himself a glass of water.

Quick as a flash, I opened my history, placing another book so as to hide it. When Mr. Juul was in his seat again, I read a whole half page as if I knew it by rote.

I cast a glance at Mr. Juul. He was looking intently at me with those brown eyes of his.

“Inger Johanne! If I had not seen it myself, I should never have believed it, never—that you would cheat!”

“Inger Johanne cheated?” “Inger Johanne?” “Cheated?” different voices called

in loud whispers from the desks as all the class turned and stretched their necks to look at me.

Oh, how sorry, how sorry **I** was! How **I** wished **I** had not done it. Sorry, ashamed, disgraced!

“ You may go out into the hall, Inger Johanne, and stay there the rest of the hour,” said Mr. Juul in a deep voice.

I went out, every one in the class still staring at me.

I had been sent out into the hall before, but that was because **I** had been too lively; never for cheating. ,Never in my life for cheating. Oh, what a disgrace! What a disgrace! It was the very worst thing **I** could have done. What would Father say when he saw the marks in my report book? For **I** should surely be marked; **I** saw that by Mr. Juul’s manner. Oh, **I** should never in the world be happy again, never! How could **I** be?

I don’t know whether any of you ever stood out in the hall a whole hour, thinking of the marks you would get and the scoldings. Well,

it is not at all comfortable. As the time dragged on, I could think of nothing to do but to reach up as far as I could on the walls and destroy the spider webs, setting free the captured flies that hung in the webs, buzzing.

At last the hour came to an end. All the class looked hard at me when I went back into the room. No one said anything, they only stared.

“Pooh!” said I, tossing my head and pretending there was nothing the matter; but I had to own to myself that it was frightfully embarrassing.

I would not go out at recess; no, not for anything would I go out. I sat at my desk the whole time and sketched pen-and-ink heads on a new blotting-paper. I felt as if I should never play any more, I was so disgusted with myself. Oh, no one should ever, ever cheat!

How remorseful I was, and how miserable, as I sat there alone that recess, while the girls were chattering and laughing and having a jolly time together out-of-doors!

During the last two hours of school we have Norwegian composition with the school principal. We had written compositions upon "Our Country's Productions," and they were to be returned to us on this day. Usually the hours with the principal are the pleasantest any one could have, but to-day everything was horrid for me.

Mr. Juul had, of course, told him that I had been cheating. I scarcely dared look at him.

When the lesson time came to an end, the principal said, "Inger Johanne, come with me to my office."

What he said to me in there I shall never tell. It made me terribly unhappy and I cried and cried. Never, oh! never in my life would I cheat again. Probably the principal was sure of that, too, because he did not put any bad mark in my report-book.

As soon as I got home, however, I told Mother what I had done, for everything is easier to bear, somehow, no matter what it is, if I only tell Mother.

XIV

THE TIME I NEARLY DROWNED

OH yes—that time —

In reality, this story isn't much to my credit, but you shall hear it nevertheless.

You ought to see how many queer persons there are in our town. I mean persons who are not exactly right in their minds, but who are allowed to go about because they never do any harm. I used to think it was great fun to run after them and tease them, but I never do that any more; and the reason I do not is just what I am going to tell you about.

Well, Mrs. Lennertsen is one of these queer persons. She is awfully dressy, wears a French shawl that trails on the ground and carries a blue silk parasol with a jointed handle so that it can be turned at different angles. When any one greets her, she stands stock-still and makes a grand curtsey such as we

learn at dancing-school. She is so old that there are criss-cross wrinkles all over her face.

With every single ship that comes in Mrs. Lennertsen expects seven barrels of gold, neither more nor less. Under her shawl she carries a whip and is not at all slow in bringing it out to use if any one teases her; and she is awfully comical then. But I never tease her any more, I really don't.

Well, then there is Jens Julsen, with a humpy nose such as the ancient kings of Oldenborg had. He wears a worn-out silk hat and sings songs, one after the other, incessantly. After each song he says, "Finis," and immediately starts a new one.

But never mind about Jens Julsen now. Evan "Henny-Penny" (I don't know his real last name) is the one this story is about. He is small and rosy-cheeked and wears a gray coat that reaches down to his shoes; and he carries a big staff that is much longer than himself. It is really a big, stout fence rail, and you can understand what a long way he

can reach and hit with that. He was once a school-teacher, but now he lives at the old yellow poorhouse, although he usually spends the whole day on the wharf. There is no one that all of us children have been so horrid to as to Evan Henny-Penny.

Whenever he showed himself at the street corner we were after him, shouting, teasing, and snatching at his coat. The rough boys from the Point may have treated him shamefully, but among the children in our part of the town, I believe I was the worst.

Every single day I thought of some new way to tease him. Of course, at that time, it seemed mighty good fun; now it makes me loathe myself to think how I plagued him, for if it had not been for that queer little Evan —

It was one afternoon in October. The weather was just the kind that I like so much, a strong gale blowing from the sea, high tide washing over the wharf, and a rumbling, roaring sound like thunder in the air. The big

ash-trees near the church writhed and creaked and groaned; the weather-vane turned round and round, squeaking every minute. All that blowing and stir and noise everywhere suits me exactly. I just love it.

But I could never get any of my friends to enjoy it with me.

“Ugh! No.—Are you going out in such weather?” they say when I ask them to go. “Ugh! Such frightful weather.”

So I go alone, up on the hills, or down on the wharf, or anywhere.

That day, too, I was alone. I had gone to the big ice-house at South Bay, because some one had said that a big ship was adrift out there and I wanted to see it. But, if you please, that was all bosh—there was neither ship nor anything else worth looking at in South Bay.

When I go off alone that way I think of tremendously entertaining things. I think of families with ever so many children and the jolly times they have. I know how all the

people I invent look, and what they say, and what they do; and they travel over the whole wide world. I decide everything for them. I am queen over them all. To invent this way is the most entertaining thing in the world. Sometimes I tell Karen and Mina about it, but I can see plainly that they don't understand at all what I mean.

“Do you know these people?” asked Karen once.

“No, I just invent them, you know.”

“Can there be any fun in that?” sniffed Karen, scornfully. Since then I never talk about what I think of when I am alone.

I remember well that as I walked to the ice-house at South Bay that afternoon I made up a story about two little girls who traveled alone all the way to Egypt to visit an awfully rich uncle.

Since there was no ship or anything interesting to be seen, I sat down on the edge of the wharf, thinking it would be fun to see whether the waves would dash high enough to

wet my legs if I stretched them far down. One wave after another came rolling in, black but topped with white foam. Whack!—splash!—one struck against the wharf. No, it did not reach me. Now another wave,—an enormous one—but that did not reach me either.

Some one came patterning along behind me. I turned around and saw Evan Henny-Penny with his long staff.

“Is that you, Henny-Penny?” I called.

“You’ll fall into the water if you sit there,” said Evan.

“Shall I really, Henny-Penny?”

He came nearer, right to where I was sitting. I got up hastily. I am not in the least afraid of Evan, but for all that, it made me feel queer to have him come so close to me with that long staff of his.

As you can well understand, I hadn’t a clear conscience with regard to Evan, so horrid as I had always been to him with my teasing and calling him names.

When I had run a few steps away from him, I got hold of a little stick and began to tease him. I danced round and round him, poked him with the stick and sang a nonsense song that always made him frightfully angry:

“Anna Pelanna with light blue beard,
If you live till summer
You’ll lay an egg,
You’ll lay an egg —”

“If I once get hold of you, you young villain,” said Evan Henny-Penny.

He tried to hit me with his stick, time after time, while I kept on dancing round and round him and chanting, “You’ll lay an egg. You’ll lay —”

Without knowing it, I had danced to the very edge of the wharf and—splash! over I went, down into the black water.

Never to my dying day shall I forget that moment. To fall and fall, to feel the ice-cold water covering me, nothing to catch hold of, knowing myself sinking — The water seemed to freeze my very heart. I tried to

scream, but could not; the water thundered in my ears. I clutched with both hands—every-thing failed me—only ice-cold water—I sank —sank —

I came up again. Oh, there was the wharf! I gave a piercing shriek, then—what was that? Something was let down from the wharf, something that moved. I grabbed it, and recognized it as Evan Henny-Penny's staff. Keeping tight hold with both hands, I felt the staff pulled from above. How little Evan managed it, I can't understand. People who heard about it afterward said it was a perfect miracle, but up to the wharf he drew me, till I could catch hold of the edge. Then he grasped my arms, pulled and pulled with all his might, and there I was on the wharf.

“Oh, Evan—Evan! Don’t be angry, Evan,” were the first words I said.

“I got you up,” said Evan, with a sly smile. “You screamed horribly there by the wharf.”

“Come home with me, Evan,” I said. “Please do.”



I FELT THE STAFF PULLED FROM ABOVE.—*Page 196.*

I felt that I must have him go home with me or I couldn't thank him enough.

“Not a bit of it. You needn't think I'll do that,” answered Evan Henny-Penny.

So I had to run home alone, in my dripping clothes. My teeth chattered, I was so cold. I ran all the way, and right up-stairs to Gunhild, who put me to bed and sent some one to call Mother.

Oh, how I cried when I got to bed—because it was Evan Henny-Penny who had saved me; Evan, whom I had teased and been so horrid to, always, always!

“Oh, Mother, Mother! You must give Evan a lot to eat—lots of good things!”

“Yes, child, you may be sure I shall; but you must beg his pardon for behaving so outrageously to him, Inger Johanne; and you must never tease him or any other such poor creatures again.”

Since that October afternoon Evan has had dinner at our house every single day. When we have anything especially good, I am glad

for his sake. I always look out that the best isn't all eaten up at our table, but that Evan, out in the kitchen, gets a good big portion.

And now I never tease any of them any more, never,—Mrs. Lennertsen, Jens Julsen, or Evan; and if anybody else attempts it when I am around, I put an end to it pretty quickly, you may depend upon that. I run after a policeman immediately. Not after Mr. Weiby, who would only say, "Well, well. Off with you!" but after Mr. Skarnes, who takes them by the neck and strikes out with his club. Of course, all the children are terribly afraid of him, so teasing is getting out of fashion in our town, I am happy to say.

XV

SURPRISING THE CLOCKMAKER

NEVER in my life have I liked Clockmaker Krause, and for that I have three good reasons. The first is that he never bows to me, although Consul Gjertz and the Chief of Police take off their hats to me when I curtsey—and he also might do as much as that, I think.

The second reason is that I can't bear the way he carries himself when he walks. Some persons stoop forward, but Clockmaker Krause leans over back. From his heels to the top of his head, his figure makes a slanting line backward just like the mast of a sailboat in a heavy sea. He carries himself that way just because he thinks himself of so much consequence.

The third reason for my not liking him is that he has nailed some boards together in the fence around his yard, so that we can't run through that short way when the clock says

ten minutes to nine and we are rushing to school in a hurry. It is really awfully mean of Clockmaker Krause to do that, for it can't hurt him a mite if we run through his yard two or three times a day.

Clockmaker Krause is never out except in the evening, when there is moonlight; and he never walks farther than from his own steps to the deacon's fence—from the deacon's fence to his own steps;—that's the way he keeps on,—and he looks like a thin slanting streak in the moonlight.

I really believe it was Teresa Billington's fault that the fence was nailed together. Yes, I'm sure we can thank her for that. Teresa is housekeeper for Clockmaker Krause, and she is even more exasperating to me than he is. She is fat and pale and the expression of her face never changes; and when people are consequential like Krause and with such a set face as Teresa's, I call it exasperating. She has nothing to feel high and mighty about. She is not from our town.

Although her expression is so set, I made her change it once, at any rate. It was one summer evening when I was allowed to ride the truckman's horse home. This man lived a little outside of the town; and there were many persons on the road taking a walk in the twilight. As I rode along, I suddenly saw Teresa Billington with her red parasol and her disgustingly haughty air. "Now I'll just see if I can't make that set expression change," I thought, and with that I turned the big horse towards her and rode right close to her.

Goodness gracious! You may well believe that her face took on a different look. The red parasol dropped into the road, Teresa Billington opened her mouth wide and shrieked and stretched her arms up against the steep hillside. It was impossible for her to go anywhere, you see, for the bank was straight up and down like a wall. But I very calmly turned the horse and rode on my way.

Another time that Teresa was angry with me was about the kittens, but that time I was

innocent. It was Mrs. Pussy's fault. Our dear delightful Mrs. Pussy had four little kittens and I put them in a basket in our attic. It was a fine basket, beautifully trimmed with lace and with a doll's blanket in the bottom of it; but, only think! Mrs. Pussy wouldn't stay there.

Clockmaker Krause lives a little way from us, back on the hill. In his yard there is a tumble-down woodshed and in its attic, yes, there, if you please, was where Mrs. Pussy wanted to keep her kittens. One by one she carried them, holding them by the neck, from that lace-trimmed basket in our attic, up the hill and into the loft of that rickety woodshed of Krause's. Naturally I followed her, and, sure enough, on a heap of rags in a corner lay Mrs. Pussy purring, with all the four black, silky-soft kittens scrambling over her.

The very minute I got up there Teresa Bilington came also.

“What are you doing here?” she asked, her voice quivering, for she was in a regular rage.

“I am just taking our kittens away,” I said, gathering them up in my apron.

“Such alley-cats that go into other folks’ houses—it would serve them right if they had their heads chopped off,” said Teresa. “And such gad-about children, too,” she shouted down the ladder after me. “Children that grow up to be nothing but nuisances to other folks.”

Well, later came the time that I planned the surprise for Clockmaker Krause. One moonlight night he was walking up and down the street as usual. Karen and I went past him again and again and curtsied every time, but he looked only at the moon. Then we took a great notion to play some joke on him; and do you know what we did?

The clocks in his shop had struck seven almost at one and the same instant. Some boomed slowly in deep muffled tones, some rang delicate quick strokes. It sounded like chimes when all his clocks were striking.

The clockmaker had just gone away from his steps, and we knew that there was no one in the shop when he took these little walks.

"I'm going to run in and move the hands of all the clocks around to eight," said I. "So the next time Krause comes to his shop door, they will strike again. My! What a surprise it will be for him, won't it?"

Karen was to stand outside and whistle through her fingers if Krause came down the street sooner than we expected.

I dashed up the high flight of stone steps into the shop and shoved the hands quickly around on five clocks. Just then Karen whistled furiously through her fingers—right under the window—and I heard Krause on the stone steps.

Never shall I forget my fright. I ducked down behind the counter in the darkest corner, and there I lay. Sin brought its own punishment that time, I can tell you, for it was horrible lying there expecting every minute to be discovered. Krause busied himself with some-

thing over on a table; then two of the clocks whose hands I had moved began to strike, and the strokes rang out sharp and clear in the stillness. Krause turned hastily around.

“What’s that?” he exclaimed aloud. Another clock began to strike, then another and another. I can’t describe how I felt as I lay there and heard them.

Krause could scarcely believe his own ears.

“What in the world is the matter?” he exclaimed. “The clocks are all striking eight, five minutes after they have struck seven!”

Just then Karen whistled again under the window.

“It’s those rascally young ones who have been doing mischief here!” shouted Krause suddenly, and he rushed headlong out-of-doors.

That was my salvation; for Krause naturally thought that whoever had meddled with his clocks was out in the street. He had no idea that I was lying behind his counter.

When he had dashed out, it didn’t take me

long to get out either, I can tell you! Down the stone steps in two hops, up the street and around Mrs. Milberg's corner; and there I was —safe. Karen came breathlessly the other way through Miss Fretteland's garden. Krause had not seen her, either, and joyful indeed were we at our escape.

A little later we, with a most innocent air, walked up and down past Clockmaker Krause, who stood in his doorway watching. But would you believe it? I was found out after all! Now you shall hear.

The next morning when I was on my way to school, Teresa stood at the clockmaker's door.

“Are not these yellow gloves yours?” she asked.

Yes, of course they were mine. They were deep yellow and very stylish, and I made a great display of them whenever I had them on.

“Well, well. They are yours, are they? They lay on the floor in the shop, so perhaps you know who it was went in there and ruined all the clocks for Krause.”

“Ruined them?” I said aghast, looking up at Teresa in real fright.

“Krause, Krause!” called Teresa. “Come out here.”

But I dared not stay any longer to talk with Teresa, for it was late and I must hurry to school; so I took to my heels and ran away, not sorry to avoid meeting the clockmaker.

At school I felt all the time that there was something weighing upon me, something disagreeable. Nothing was pleasant. I got “one” on my composition about “Love of Country,” but even that did not cheer me. What Teresa had said,—that I had ruined the clocks,—was too dreadful.

Suppose Krause said I must pay for those five big clocks! Ugh! I was so upset that my heart was in my mouth all day.

By now Krause had probably been up to see Father. For a moment I thought I would not go home that day; I would go up on the hill and eat frozen whortleberries for dinner,—or stay down on the wharf all day and sleep in

our old barn, and never go home any more,—or go off in a steamship. Oh, what should I do? What should I do?

When school was over I went around by the wharf to drag out the time. Every one had gone home to dinner but myself and Constable Stiksrud, and it was absolutely still over the whole market-place. A dog barked up by the corner and Stiksrud turned around quickly with an angry face. Everything is to be very quiet and orderly at the market-place in our town, you see.

“Aren’t you going home to your dinner?” asked Stiksrud, at last. So of course I had to go.

As soon as I got home I had a suspicion that they knew what I had done. There was a heavy feeling in the air at the dinner table. Everybody was so silent—so silent! I ate all the soup from my plate—something I seldom do. I didn’t believe Father was silent because he knew about the clocks, for he always keeps still at meals; but Mother usually talks, and

to-day there wasn't a word breathed from behind the soup tureen.

After we had finished dinner, the blow came. Mother called me into the pantry.

"Clockmaker Krause's housekeeper has been up here, Inger Johanne. You have been doing something wrong again, haven't you?"

"No, Mother—I don't believe I ruined the clocks—I only—I only shoved the hands around—very quickly, you know—"

"Shoved the hands, you say?"

"Yes—just for fun, Mother—don't be angry—just so that the clocks should strike again—Krause would be so surprised."

Mother looked thoughtfully out of the pantry window.

"Well, we shall have to see about finding a way out of all this; perhaps we ought to send you to boarding-school in Germany, for you are really as wild as the worst boy."

"No, no, Mother. Don't send me away—I'll never think of any more mischief—I'll be so good—"

“The heart is good enough,” said Mother, opening the pantry door. “But, my dear Inger Johanne, don’t let me hear any more complaints about you.”

Ugh! They always threaten me with these horrid boarding-schools, where I should learn to behave properly. When I have done something that is a little bad, then I am to go to boarding-school in Sondfjord, but when I have been perfectly wild, as Mother calls it—then I am to go to Germany or to Pommeren, wherever that is.

However, none of the clocks were damaged at all. Teresa had only said they were ruined to frighten me. But just think! I never got my yellow gloves back. Teresa kept them and I couldn’t bear to ask her for them.

Well, that’s the way I surprised Clockmaker Krause, and I got more trouble than fun out of it. However, I shall never curtsey to him any more; he may depend upon that.

XVI

GHOSTS

ALL the people in the town think that our house is haunted. They say that old Customs Officer Borgen, who used to own the house and who has been dead for many, many years is the ghost that haunts it.

The house is awfully old, with a tremendously long sloping roof, a big garret, lots of closets and poke-holes under the eaves, and a pitch-dark hall with unexpected steps, over which people who don't know about them tumble head over heels.

Above the big garret, in the high peak of the roof, there are two lofts, one above the other; and it is in the topmost loft that the old customs officer walks about and busies himself; at least, so people say.

“V-s-s-s,” sounds from up there, and a little while after, “Bum, bum, bum.” It may be

the wind in under the roof-tiles that says, "V-s-s-s," but no one can explain the "Bum, bum, bum." That must be the customs officer, you see.

The maids are always afraid to go to the uppermost loft after dark, and really it isn't pleasant to go up there when it is light, either. It seems so queer, somehow, as if some one stood behind you all the time who would grab hold of your dress or your braids. Karsten is just as afraid as I am, but he will never own it; he just brags.

"Pooh! It's nothing. Girls and women are afraid of everything. Well, here's the boy so strong that he could and would throttle seven customs officers, if necessary."

Ugh! Karsten has grown so conceited lately that he is beyond everything. He is always saying that I am nothing but a girl, but that he is a boy, he is. (Oh, you wait, Karsten Cocky-cub; you'll get paid for such talk, depend upon it.)

The thought of the customs officer wouldn't

bother me much if I didn't need now and then to go into the top loft, but I do need to, you see. Up there in one corner lies a great heap of papers that old Mr. Borgen left in the house, stiff yellow papers with accounts on them. Whenever Karsten and I want any paper,—and that is almost every day, you know,—we are allowed to take what we need from that heap.

Mother doesn't like us to bring too much of the old dusty paper down at one time, and that's why I have to go up often for it. But I go like the wind up and back again. Not that I have ever seen old Mr. Borgen there, but it isn't pleasant to think that he rambles around the loft in his felt shoes and with a shade over his eyes. That's the way he looks, people say.

One evening Father and Mother were going out to a party, and Karsten and I would be alone at home, except that I was to have Massa and Mina to supper. The weather was perfectly horrid that night. The wind wres-

tled with the old maple-trees around the house, pulled and tugged at them till they creaked. The branches of the pear-tree outside the drawing-room windows swayed to and fro and struck against the panes.

We had been romping at a great rate all the afternoon before dark, and had danced so hard that the drawing-room floor shook, and Ingeborg, the cook, had come up from the basement to know whether we were going to tear the house down. But we didn't bother ourselves about what she said, for she is always fussy.

Later we teased Karsten, chasing him through all the rooms, the parlor, the little room, dining-room, living-room and out through the kitchen; and we kept shouting at him:

“Karsten Cocky-Cub,
In a half butter-tub.”

The boys at school call him that, and it always makes him furious. His white hair was

standing straight up, his face was fiery red. Suddenly he turned and sprang towards us, waving a piece of knotted rope which he said was a Russian "knout." Massa, Mina, and I screeched like locomotive whistles, hid behind doors and shrieked again in terror when Karsten caught us.

Just then Ingeborg appeared again and said in her scolding voice, "Now, children, don't you know you shouldn't race and romp like this so late in the evening, and here in this house where it isn't safe, and in such weather?"

"Look out for the customs officer, Ingeborg; he'll soon be here," shouted Karsten.

Ingeborg shook her fist at him. "Don't talk ugly, boy; he may come before you think."

I don't know why it was, but suddenly I lost all desire for noisy fun. I proposed that we go into the drawing-room again. Great, broken clouds hurried over the sky, the moon shone out now and then and gleamed into the room, bright and clear between the leafless, swaying branches.

I should much rather have had the lamps lighted, but since the others preferred sitting in the dark I said nothing. We packed ourselves together on a sofa in a corner. The moon had gone behind a cloud now, the branches kept tapping, tapping, the big room was perfectly dark and had grown cold, too.

“Let’s tell ghost-stories,” suggested Massa. “I suppose you have heard about Eyvind who met a ghost in the churchyard once.”

“Oh, Massa! don’t tell that. I’m so afraid I’m going to put my feet up on the sofa,” said Mina.

All of us must have our feet up, even Karsten the braggart.

“Well, people say, you know, that the attic in this house is haunted,” said Massa.

“Yes, but that is only nonsense,” said Karsten scornfully.

“Don’t you be so superior, Karsten boy,” I said. “You would not dare to go up in the top loft, not for a million dollars.”

“Yes, indeed, I dare.”

“ Well, go then.”

“ That would be the easiest thing in the world for me,” Karsten announced; “ but there is nothing brave about going up there now.”

“ Oh, he’s afraid!” “ Shame on him!”
“ It’s a disgrace for a boy to be afraid.”

We taunted and teased him, all three of us, and pointed scornful fingers at him.
“ Sha-a-me!”

“ I’d just as soon go up there this very minute, if that’s what you want,” said Karsten, stoutly.

Yes, it was exactly what we wanted. Another long argument from him, more and more teasing from us; at last he was sick of it.

“ Well, I’m going. You shall see I’m no ’fraid-cat, not I.” And out of the door he ran. We heard him tramp up the attic stairs, and stumble around making all the noise he could as he crossed the long garret.

Never had I admired Karsten so much. He isn’t anything to admire in daily life, more’s

the pity, but when he ran up to that haunted attic I had to admire him.

Down-stairs on the sofa we listened with nerves on edge. The wind whined and roared; there came a sudden, violent blast down the chimney, but we heard not a sound from Karsten. Oh, how terror-stricken I was! Suppose the ghost was choking Karsten that moment, and it was I who had teased him into going up there.

I sprang to the door. "Oh, Karsten, Karsten, come down! Come down!"

"Bum, bum, bum!" sounded with frightful distinctness from the loft.

"Did you hear that? Oh, oh, oh, Karsten, Karsten!"

A fresh blast of wind came, the hall door blew open, and in the very same instant there was such a bang and a crash up in the attic as I never heard the equal of. It sounded exactly like an earthquake. It's true there's never been an earthquake in our town and I don't know what kind of noise it would make,

but I imagine it would be just about as loud and terrifying as that thundering commotion in the loft. I thought I should die of fright. Massa, Mina, and I clung to each other.

“Oh, I shall die! My heart is thumping dreadfully,” I said.

Just then we heard Karsten. He darted through the hall in a flash, wild with fright.

“Oh, oh, oh, the customs officer said ‘V-s-s-s’ right in my ear!”

We took no long time to think, I assure you, but rushed all together to the door of the drawing-room that led into Father’s office. We did not dare run through the hall, for the customs officer was surely right on Karsten’s heels. It was perfectly pitch-dark in the office. Mina upset a chair as she ran, Massa dashed into a bookcase and screamed. My knees shook so that my legs would scarcely carry me when I got to the office entry.

There is only one door from the office to the courtyard. The important thing now was to unbolt this outside door quickly. Oh, how I

pulled! At last I got the door open and the cold outside air struck us. I felt that we were saved as we rushed out into the black night.

“Let's run home to my house,” said Massa.

So down the hill we all sprang in desperate haste, Karsten leading. How the wind blew! Not a person was to be seen on the whole street down which we ran as if for our lives.

We came within an inch of frightening the wits out of Massa's mother when we rushed in upon her, white as a sheet and panting for breath. We could scarcely speak we were so terrified.

“Oh! Oh! Such a terrible noise, Mrs. Peckell,” I exclaimed. “Exactly like Pompeii.” I meant “Vesuvius,” but I didn't remember the right name that minute.

When we had quieted down and had eaten some fig-cake and sweetmeats, we found to our amazement that Karsten denied positively that he had been afraid.

“I ran because you ran,” said he. “And it was just because it was so dark up there that

I ran down from the loft. I am not a cat to see in the dark. The rumbling was terrible and something whispered 'V-s-s-s' close to my ears; but if the customs officer himself had come he'd have got a warm welcome. Here's the boy to manage him," said Karsten.

After a while Ingeborg, with a most bewildered face and carrying our outside things, came to Mrs. Peckell's to inquire whether we were there.

When she couldn't find us in any of the rooms and discovered the office door wide open she understood that we had gone out. She had been frightfully worried and had searched for us a long time, and now she was very angry.

"Who ever saw the like of you children? Such outrageous behavior!" grumbled Ingeborg, hurrying us home.

We were the ones who got the "warm welcome," as Karsten calls it, when Father heard about the ghost. He immediately got a light and we had to go with him up into the loft.

Right near the last flight of stairs lay the heavy old folding screen on top of a big tin bath-tub.

“Here is your earthquake, Inger Johanne,” said Father. “Don’t you remember that the tub hung here and the screen stood there? Karsten must have knocked them both down in his fright.”

“Yes, I did run against something,” said Karsten.

“You were the ghost yourself,” said Father. “And as for the other remarkable sounds that you tell of, I shall have a man up on the roof to-morrow to see to the tiles. He’ll put a stop to strange noises, I’ll warrant.”

Just think of its being only the big screen and the bath-tub that we had been so awfully frightened by! Karsten was extremely embarrassed.

Mother did not scold us or laugh at us. She said that those who had died were so happy and so much better off in heaven that they would not wish to come back here.



“HERE IS YOUR EARTHQUAKE, INGER JOHANNE,” SAID
FATHER.—*Page 222.*

And that is surely true. For, really, when you come to think of it, what pleasure could it be for an old customs officer to go wandering about in the dark up in a loft?

XVII

A SNOW FIGHT

I WONDER if you ever knew anything to equal the wonderful winter weather we had that day. It had been snowing until all the mountains and rocks around our old house had vanished, and instead of them, there were only beautiful mounds so soft-looking that you wanted awfully to turn somersaults in them.

The day before, there had been a very slight thaw, but during the night everything was frozen hard again, and when the sun came out that morning, thousands and tens of thousands of diamonds were scattered everywhere, sparkling, glittering, flashing, so that the brightness hurt your eyes.

On the old trees down the hillside bits of frozen, glistening snow shone out against the blue sky; the sky was wonderfully blue that day, I remember.

How a sudden overwhelming gladness can

sometimes take possession of one! Not necessarily because there is anything especial to be happy over. For that matter, such sudden joy can come simply because it is fine, bright weather, and can be so exciting that you want to shout at the top of your lungs, throw out your arms, or turn somersaults, just because it is so good to be alive!

Exactly that way did I feel the morning I am telling you about. Our month's vacation had begun. I stood on the front steps with my hat and coat on, for I was going to see Massa and Mina, and I was in such high glee over nothing that I had a great mind to jump up into the shining air. But I controlled myself, for through the window of Father's office I could see Policeman Weiby's purple nose, and he would certainly think I was crazy if I behaved that way.

When it is frightfully icy on the hill Policeman Weiby always wears boots with sharp nails on the soles when he comes up to see Father. Once inside the house the dumpy old

policeman lifts first one foot and then the other so that the nails won't go into the floor and fasten him there. My! I wish that might happen some day!

I buttoned my light brown gloves very nicely,—they go away up over my wrists,—held my muff straight down, and pushed my chest out and my stomach in, as the grown-up ladies do when they walk about the street. Policeman Weiby probably had wit enough to see now that I was almost grown up.

A long steep slope with trees on both sides leads up to our house. At the bottom of the hill Karsten was toiling and struggling with a great big box which he kept turning over and over so as to get it up the icy hill which was smooth as glass.

The ear-tabs on his fur cap were unfastened and stuck straight out in the air, and his ears, fiery red, looked like two big handles. With his thick fur cap and his hard work, he was dripping with sweat; and on his hands he had big white mittens that were frozen stiff.

“Come and help me,” he called.

I looked at my light brown, tight-fitting gloves.

“No, I thank you,” I said.

“You ought to see what fun it is to coast down on this box; it bumps and makes such a rattlety-bang noise—it’s awfully jolly.”

I suddenly had a burning desire to try this sport, forgot completely that the chest should be held out and the stomach in, took good hold of the box and pulled,—and there it was, up the hill. Then Karsten sat on the front of the box, I back of him and down the hill we went.

It might well be said that we bumped and thumped along. I felt as if I were being shaken to pieces, especially where the road turned at an angle half-way down the hill. Whether that turn caused it or not, smash went the box and thud! Out I tumbled on one side, Karsten on the other, while the remains of the box sped down and hit against Madam Land’s woodshed with a violent whack. My hands had struck the road with such force that

both my light brown gloves had burst right across the middle of the palm and my left knee had such a horrid pain in it that I could scarcely get up.

The red-cheeked old woodchopper came out of Madam Land's woodshed, hitching up his trousers.

“Did she fall off?” he asked. I did not deign to answer him.

Karsten was furious.

“It was your fault, you are so heavy and clumsy; and now the box is smashed that we were to use this afternoon in the snow-fight.”

“A fight? With whom?”

“With the boys at Tangen, of course. Why should they have that grand big coast all to themselves? We boys from the town never go there with a sled without their coming at us and hitting us; and we have only this miserable little hill to coast on.”

“Miserable little hill? This?”

“Yes, I call it a miserable little hill to coast down when Madam Land's woodshed is right

at the foot, blocking the way so that you have to twist your legs off, almost, to steer around on to the church green. But we have had a council of war, and this afternoon we shall thrash those Tangen boys thoroughly and take the hill for our use."

This sounded frightfully interesting.

"What time are you going to fight?"

"Oh, you needn't think that we'll have you girls with us. You may be mighty sure we won't."

Karsten always pretends that he knows everything the bigger boys plan among themselves. As a matter of fact, they simply order him around as much as they please, but he will never acknowledge that.

"We were going to have that box to put our balls in,—snowballs, you know. We were going to make lots of them right after dinner, and then drag the box full of snowballs through Main Street and up Back Gorge and there we would be—right behind Tangen in a jiffy."

I limped up the hill with my bruised knee aching, but I determined that I would go out to Tangen that afternoon to see the snow-fight, no matter how painful my knee was.

In the living-room all through the noon-hour I could hear Karsten in the woodshed, pounding and hammering at the box. Naturally I had wormed out of him that the fight was to begin at half-past three precisely.

I said nothing about having hurt my knee, and a little past three o'clock went down to the town after Massa and Mina. Yes, indeed, they were crazy to go to the fight, even if the boys didn't want us; and we knew a short cut through Terkelsen's garden, so off we ran.

By this short cut, we reached the top of the Tangen hill in no time. Oh, but it was a splendid hill! Very steep to begin with, so that it gave you a great send-off—tremendous speed at the start—then a long, long even stretch. You sometimes go as far as away out to Landvigen; but it is only our old blue sled "Seagull" and Nils Trap's "Racer" that go

that distance. That is because they are the best sleds in town.

Only very poor people live at Tangen, pilots and fishermen and laborers. The small houses are scattered about irregularly, one little hut on a height, and another in a hollow.

The whole hill was swarming with children that day,—boys and girls, big and little, and the air rang with their shouting and laughter and jollity. Not many of the children had real sleds; they coasted mostly on a long board, six or eight of them on it at a time. What of that? Hey hurrah! how they went! Some stood on skiis, the kind they make themselves out of barrel-hoops. They whizzed down the hill, bow-legged, bent way over, but they kept on their feet, anyway.

One child had a forlorn sled with a broken runner; and far below on the slope a wee little boy with a kerchief tied round his head, was dragging a stick of wood after him by a string. That was his sled.

None of our boys were to be seen yet. Our

appearance on the hill caused great astonishment. Those who were coming up stood still, whispered together and went a little to one side. At that moment a big sailor boy came up—a regular broad-shouldered square-built fellow.

“Come, now!” he shouted to us. “What are you staying around here for? We have a right to coast down our own hill even if some elegant city flies stand and look at us.” His voice was changing, and he talked as loud as if he were in the worst kind of a storm at sea.

At that moment Nils Trap’s crooked nose appeared from behind the slope, and there were the boys, Angemal Terkelsen, Jens Stub, Peter, the dean’s son, Axel Wasserfall, and a whole bunch of boys besides. I saw Karsten bringing up the rear with the box heaping full of snowballs. Ugh! I almost had palpitation of the heart at the thought of what was coming but I couldn’t bear to leave.

“What do you want?” asked the young sailor.

“ We want this slope to coast on,” said Axel Wasserfall. “ You must pack yourselves off, every one of you, or — ”

The young sailor had come close up to Axel, turning sideways and holding his arms out as boys do when they wish to pick a quarrel with any one, and staring the whole time straight into Axel’s eyes.

“ Pack yourselves off, did you say? Pack yourselves off? I’ll give you ‘ pack yourselves ’—mass of herring-bones that you are!”

And before Axel could catch his breath, the young sailor’s fist struck him in the chest, and he was lying in the snowdrift with the sailor over him; but at the same instant Nils Trap and Angemal Terkelsen jumped on the sailor’s back. Then there was such a tussle that the snow flew in all directions.

A crowd of Tangen boys came storming up the hill, but now Karsten and the rear-guard pressed forward with the snowballs.

Massa, Mina, and I were thoroughly scared and went off to one side. The air was filled

with the fast-flying icy snowballs, which hurt wherever they hit, as I myself can bear witness, for one hit me on the cheek and I had to hold my handkerchief there the whole time, it hurt me so much.

My, but it was exciting! They shouted and they screamed; they did not keep to the coast any longer, but struggled and fought out in the deep snow beside the road while fast as ever, without a pause, came the snowballs from the rear-guard whistling past one's ears.

The women from the houses around flocked out on their stone steps with babies in their arms and kept calling out something to which no one listened.

Our boys had naturally the better position the whole time, for they stood on the hilltop and threw their snowballs down, while the Tangen boys stood below and had to throw theirs up. It was not many minutes before the Tangen boys had to take to their heels and run for shelter among the houses.

One and another lonely snowball still came

whizzing up in a long curve, but it was easy to see that the Tangen boys felt themselves beaten.

Axel and Ludvig on our old broad “Seagull” coasted down first; and after them the others in a long row. My! how they laughed and shouted.

Angemal Terkelsen threw himself on his stomach on a sled—he always wants to be so bold—and Jens Stub sat astride his back.

Peter, the dean’s son, started off with his flat red sled. It was made in the country and goes so slowly that the other boys call it the “Snail.” Then Peter gets offended, for he is the kind of boy who never gets angry, but only offended.

But in the midst of all the fun and hurrahing, I began to hear a pitiful sound of crying. When I looked about, I found it came from the little boy with the kerchief on his head, the child I had noticed dragging a stick of wood by a string. It was Tollef, our washerwoman’s little boy.

A snowball had hit him in the eye, he had lost his stick of wood, and he was crying and crying. He knocked on the door of a little house, but his mother had gone out and the door was locked.

In the house next to the one outside of which Tollef stood crying, lived a man whom the whole town called Jack-of-all-trades, because he fixed lamps, soldered old teakettles, and mended all sorts of things. He was a little, grimy man and was now standing out on his front steps.

“Will you take away even this little bit of pleasure from the poor folks’ children?” asked Jack-of-all-trades. He looked at our boys laughing and shouting as they coasted down the long hill. His black eyes flashed and I came pretty near being afraid of him as I stood there. And all at once it struck me what a shame it was and what a horrid, mean thing we had done when we drove those poverty-stricken children from that hill of theirs. I rushed to the snowball box, tipped it over and

trampled what snowballs there were left into the snow with all my might.

I remember that I began to cry when I got home; I told Mother that my knee pained me from the knock it got when I coasted on the box, and that was true; but really my crying was more because of what Jack-of-all-trades had said, and because we had spoiled the fun of poor little bow-legged Tollef.

However, the Tangen boys got their hill back again before long, you may be sure of that! And I'm glad to say that our boys have let them alone ever since.

XVIII

A CHRISTMAS VISIT

A FEW days before Christmas, whether because Mother was sick or for some other reason, it was decided that Karsten and I should be sent to the Parsonage for a short visit. Peter Olsen, from Uncle's parish, was just then in town, so a message was sent to him, asking if he would take us with him in his sleigh. All waters were frozen, even the fjord, so we could drive the whole distance.

Indeed, Peter Olsen had not the least objection to taking us, and late in the evening two days before Christmas the sleigh and two big horses stood before our door. I always like to sit where I can see the horses, so I sat in front with the driver and Karsten sat behind with Peter Olsen.

Karsten was so stuffed out with wraps that people in town, as I heard later, thought that he was Peter's wife. For a long time after-

ward, when I wished to tease Karsten, I would call him Mrs. Peter Olsen, for that made him furious.

We drove along in the moonlight over hills and frozen ponds, and through groves where the branches hung so low that they hit our heads and sent an avalanche of soft wet snow down our necks.

On Sandy-point fjord, the moonlight shed its silver radiance over the ice; and the ice gave forth a hollow roaring sound under the big sleigh and the heavy feet of the horses. Peter Olsen was known as a regular dare-devil on the ice but perhaps even he felt that the fjord was not wholly to be trusted that night, for all at once he stood up to his full height in the sleigh, struck out with his arms and called loudly to the horses in both German and French.

“*Allons!*” shouted Peter with all the power of his lungs. His red, curly beard showed clearly in the moonlight. Sharp particles of frozen snow whizzed about our ears; and bits

of ice and lumps of snow were thrown upon us as the horses dashed swiftly along. Now we were nearing the shore. Peter called to the driver that he must throw himself out of the sleigh to lighten it; he himself, still standing upright, seized the reins in his powerful hands. The ice groaned and creaked. Peter kept on shouting to the horses. There! At last they had firm ground under their feet. The driver came trudging along, and Peter Olsen turned to look back at the breaking ice.

“ Well! We managed that fine!” said he, chuckling and laughing.

Farther up the slope, we overtook a little schoolmaster who was allowed to stand on the runners at the back of the sleigh. The road was only a wood-road and very rough with naked tree-roots, stones and lumps of ice.

“ This isn’t as flat as a pancake, is it?” remarked the little schoolmaster.

Far off in the forest some beast gave an ugly howl. Peter said it was a wolf, but I was not the least bit scared. It was impossible to be

afraid, when you were with Peter Olsen, so stout and strong and trustworthy.

At a sharp turn in the road, the little schoolmaster fell off his perch on the runners of the sleigh and lay flat in the road.

“Now we have discharged the teacher,” said Peter Olsen. We had to wait quite a while in the darkness under the trees before he caught up with us.

Nothing a bit interesting happened during the rest of the long ride, and at half-past twelve we drew up at the Parsonage.

I had rejoiced at the prospect of going to the Parsonage at Christmas time, but now that I was there, it wasn’t just as I had expected it to be.

It looked so altogether different in winter from what it did in summer,—so old and gray, almost hidden in snow, and as if crouching under the hill. In the second story where the rooms were not used in winter, all the windows were entirely covered with white frost. The courtyard was one expanse of ice, with narrow

black paths, where ashes had been strewn, leading from one building to another. The maids stepped cautiously along these ash paths, but even so, one or another maid would suddenly sit down with a resounding thwack.

Great-Aunt was at the door and seemed glad enough to see us. She was pretty good to us children, though she never liked any of our fun or play, no matter what it was. Karsten was her especial favorite. He amused her mightily because he exaggerated so much. She would listen with a most serious face to Karsten's yarns.

“We have a cat at home,” Karsten told her, “that is the wickedest cat in the whole town. No other cat dares come into our yard, for our cat either bites its head off or kills it at once.”

“That must be a bad cat,” said Great-Aunt.

“Yes, and it is so big, too. Why, really, if you see it a little way off, you would think it was a calf; yes, some have thought it was a cow.”

“Ugh! That must be a horrid town to lie

in, with such cats around," said Great-Aunt. "But I suppose there are some big, strong men there, too."

"Oh, yes! You may be sure of that. One man at home is so strong that he carried a barrel of wheat, full of water besides, up a hill that was as steep as the wall of this room."

That is the way Karsten would go on, and Great-Aunt was tremendously amused by it.

But now I must tell you how things went during Christmas tide.

The whole place was in perfect order, freshly cleaned from cellar to attic, shining and beautiful. When we came down-stairs in the morning, the regular Christmas Eve dinner was already under way. I sat on the kitchen bench and ate various Christmas goodies.

Later, I went to the barn and stable and to see the pigs and the poultry.

When evening came, it wasn't as cosy and delightful as Christmas Eve at home always is, but it wasn't so bad, after all. Karsten never behaves himself anything extra when he

is away from home, and he didn't this time. First, he slept while Uncle preached, and nodded so that he nearly fell off his chair several times. Then he was sick in the night because he had eaten too much, as he has done every single Christmas as far back as I can remember.

Uncle gave me a gold-piece,—an English sovereign. Aunt Magda gave me a religious book in red binding and with gilt edges that will look very bright and handsome in my bookcase; and Great-Aunt gave me a charming little brooch of silver filigree.

It was really a pleasant Christmas Eve, after all; but when I had gone to bed, I lay awake and thought of Mother, and at last I couldn't help crying. I smothered my crying in the blankets, however, so that Karsten should not hear, for if he heard me crying, he would begin; and he roars so when he cries that he would have aroused the whole house.

Well, what do you think? On Christmas morning it rained! Yes, a fine drizzling rain

with fog out over the sea and up on the hill. When the church bells rang, they sounded like big muffled cow-bells through the fog. From the shore came the church folk, walking slowly in large groups. They did not go into the church but stood out in the drizzling rain, by the door or by the stone wall of the church-yard, waiting for the minister to go in first.

Uncle in his cassock was walking up and down the living-room floor talking with the deacon. The deacon was a big, fat man in a frock coat that was too narrow for him and pinched at the armholes. Everything about Deacon Vebjornsen was unusually large—except his frock coat. His mouth was big, his smile was big and his neck was very, very big.

“Well, well!” said Uncle.

“Well, well! Well, well!” said the deacon.

The church in another part of the parish was being repaired, so the people from there came to the service in Uncle’s church in Sand-vaag. Their deacon came, too, and Deacon Vebjornsen and he tried to see which could

sing loudest. Neither would give up. Never in my life have I seen or heard any one sing as the two deacons did that Christmas day in Sandvaag church. They stood erect in the pew, both with their mouths stretched wide open. I expected every minute that they would burst something inside of them.

Above the piercing sounds the two deacons made, came Uncle's dear voice from the pulpit, sweet and mellow and kind.

It made me think of Mother, and I had to try with all my might to keep from crying. I couldn't bear that any one should see me crying in church.

Uncle invited ever so many to go to the Parsonage to dinner;—two sailors with their wives, three school-teachers and a widow with three children. Great-Aunt stood out in the kitchen, crimson in the face, and awfully provoked at Uncle.

“Did you ever see such a man?” she burst out. “He goes and invites eleven strangers to dinner without my having any idea of it; and

the roast will be too small. The three teachers are equal to eating up all the princess pudding, just themselves alone, and—oh, I wish I were thirty feet under ground!—But I could have told you beforehand that this would happen. I could have told you!"

Aunt Magda had to go out to comfort her, and it took much coaxing to get Great-Aunt to go to the dinner-table.

"There are people enough there already," she said.

When she was at the table she kept urging and insisting that the three teachers should eat more and more of the French beans for she knew there were plenty of them.

I should like to tell you that we had a pleasant time after dinner that Christmas Day; but to tell the plain truth, I was perfectly bored.

The ladies sat in the big parlor, drank coffee and talked old-granny fashion about every possible kind of sickness; so I knew it would be much pleasanter in the sitting-room with Uncle and the sailors and the three teachers.

I had just sat down in there to listen to them when Aunt Magda came and asked me to go and amuse the strange little boys.

Karsten and the oldest boy were out on the front steps.

“Have you good muscle in your arms?” asked Karsten.

“No, I don’t think so,” answered the strange boy.

“Look here,—here you can see”—Karsten stretched out his arm. “That’s the way an arm should be, the muscle standing up in a curve; feel of this and you’ll know what muscle is.”

The boy felt of Karsten’s arm.

“You feel of it, too,” said Karsten to the two smaller boys. “Exactly like *lignum vitae*, and *lignum vitae* is the hardest thing in the world.”

All the boys admired Karsten’s muscle tremendously, that was easy to see.

It still rained steadily, so I suggested that we go into the inner hall. Oh, that dear old

Parsonage hall, where there was always a smell of old cheese and such things. Yes, the front hall smelled of rose-leaves, but the inner hall of old cheese. In the front hall, we bowed and curtsied nicely and were well-behaved; but in the other hall we played and romped and had great fun.

For the moment, I couldn't think of anything to do there but slide down the banisters. You know what jolly fun that is, sliding so frightfully fast, especially where the banister curves. I went ahead up the stairs, the four boys after me, away up to the attic, then whizz! down the banisters! The whole troop tramped up the stairs again, whizz! down again. My! this was getting to be great fun —there stood Great-Aunt at the door.

“Are you crazy, you children? Will you tear the house down over our heads? Out with you! Out, I say.”

So there we were. What should we do now?

“Let's put up a swing in the woodshed,” I suggested.

The others agreed instantly. Karsten ran to the harness-room to get a rope. I climbed up one side of the woodshed and Karsten the other; we tied and knotted the rope around a beam and made a perfectly splendid swing. When we swung very high, we went through the doorway right out into the air. To be so awfully high up gave me a tickle-y feeling in my stomach, but I liked it.

We took turns. The littlest boy was afraid. He clung tight to the rope and screamed!

“Fie for shame! A boy that doesn’t dare to swing!” I said. So he got into the swing and we pushed him; but suddenly, when he was at the very highest, he let go and fell whack! on the woodshed floor.

I was terribly scared, for it was really my fault that he had got into the swing. He sobbed and cried, poor little thing, and had a big blue bump on his forehead. I picked up a lump of ice and held it to the bump. The other children kept on swinging as high as they could.

Just then Great-Aunt appeared, with a purple handkerchief over her head.

“There! Didn’t I know there was something crazy going on again? It would be a fine thing if you made all the wood here tumble down on you, wouldn’t it? And he has fallen and hurt himself. Well, it is a wonder to me that you are all alive as yet. Take that down,” concluded Great-Aunt in her crossest tone. “Take that swing down this moment, Inger Johanne.” Great-Aunt turned to me. “For it is certainly you who are responsible for this whole business.” Karsten and I had to climb and untie the rope.

“And now come with me into the big parlor, every one of you,” said Great-Aunt. “I can’t be easy a minute unless I have you sitting right under my eyes.”

Well! There we had to sit, five of us in a row, as stiff as posts the whole long afternoon. Ugh! how angry I was at Great-Aunt.

The next day there was service in the church again, and the two deacons tried as hard as

ever to out-sing each other; but Uncle did not invite any one home to dinner. I suppose he didn't wish to displease Great-Aunt again.

"There now! To-day he might have invited half the town," said Great-Aunt, "for to-day I have plenty of food."

It rained and it rained. What in the world should Karsten and I do? Slide down the banisters we mustn't, swing in the woodshed we mustn't; but to lay a board across the chopping block and play seesaw, surely there could be no harm in that.

We found a board and seesawed up and down, up and down, until Nella, the parlor maid, came out with the message that we were to stop. We might pinch our fingers, Great-Aunt thought!

"Well, let's go and jump in the hay in the barn," suggested Karsten. "That's awfully good fun."

I had just got Karsten in the hay under me and heaped so much hay on top of him that he could scarcely breathe, when we heard Aunt

Magda's sweet, gentle voice from the barn door.

"Oh, you dear, dear children! Don't do that! Great-Aunt says that you might lose a pin in the hay that a cow would eat, and the pin might stick in her insides. Come, dears, be good children and don't play in the hay any more."

"Oh, no, Aunt Magda! Don't say that. Just come and see what fun it is. I haven't a single pin about me, Aunt Magda."

"Well, but you might lose a button, Great-Aunt says, and a cow might get it in her throat and choke on it; so come now, like good children."

Of course there was nothing else to do. Out of the hay must we come. Karsten was perfectly desperate with boredom.

"I'm going home," he said. "I won't stay here any longer, and I'm never, never in the world coming here again. They can eat their good food themselves for all of me."

I wouldn't tell Karsten so, but I felt just as

he did; and every night when I had gone to bed, I had a dreadful longing for home. I felt as if something heavy lay on my heart and clutched it. Why are they so afraid and won't let us do anything? How queer old people are! When I am old I am not going to be like Great-Aunt, I'm sure of that.

We had been at the Parsonage four days and still had to stay over Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

I didn't believe I should ever see Father and Mother again. And people said it was so pleasant to go visiting! No, it wasn't; it was horrid, it was very, very sad. I thought that if I ever got home again,—if I ever did,—I'd never, never go away from Father and Mother any more.

When I awoke next morning and saw Nella at my bedside with a tray of coffee and little cakes, I found myself, strangely enough, in much better spirits. It was rather pleasant, after all, to go visiting.

“What kind of weather is it, Nella?”

“Delightful and warm,” said Nella.

Karsten and I would rather have had good ice for skating and hard snow for coasting, so we couldn’t agree with Nella that the weather was delightful when the wind was warm and the roofs dripping.

However, we were in brilliant good humor that morning, Karsten and I. If I had imagined then what the day would bring —

Great-Aunt had not forbidden us to go into the sheep-barn, and so we were there early and late. How cosy and snug it is in a sheep-barn and what a good smell there is of sheep’s wool and dry leaves and hay!

Almost all the sheep were afraid of us, and they crowded themselves together and pushed and squeezed each other away off to a corner, looking at us with innocent eyes. There was just one sheep that was not afraid of people and liked to be petted. It squeezed itself up against me and lay close beside me when I sat down. My! How I did love that sheep!

Before we went down there that morning, Karsten suggested that we get some boiled potatoes from those that had been cooked for breakfast and take them to the sheep. I thought this was an excellent idea. It happened that there was no one in the kitchen when I went in; I supplied myself with a heaping plateful of big potatoes and went my way.

When the sheep had once tasted the potatoes, I thought they had gone crazy. They jumped over each other, pushed and jammed and pressed themselves forward, trying to get at the plate. I held it high above my head. Oh-h! All the potatoes tumbled off and rolled among the sheep. They butted each other, scrambled for the potatoes, snatched and ate in haste.

“Oh, see that sheep of yours!” said Karsten suddenly. “How queerly it behaves! Did you ever see anything like it?”

I looked. Yes, I had to agree with him, that the sheep he pointed to, my dear pet sheep, was behaving in a most peculiar manner.



OH-H! ALL THE POTATOES TUMBLED OFF AND ROLLED
AMONG THE SHEEP.—*Page 256.*

It went backward round and round a couple of times with wide-open mouth; suddenly it fell on its side, kicked a little, stretched its legs out to their full length and then lay perfectly still.

Oh, how frightened I was!

“What is it, Karsten? What is the matter with it? Help me to get it up. Oh, my sweet, dear sheep! Go after the milkmaid, Karsten,” I said.

He was gone an eternity, it seemed to me, but at last came back with the milkmaid.

“What have you done, child?” she asked in terror. “The sheep is dead. You’ll catch it from old Miss.” (She meant Great-Aunt.) “You gave it a whole potato and that stuck in its throat, you see, and choked it so it couldn’t breathe. O me! O me! What a misfortune!”

I ran out of the sheep-barn; Karsten was right at my heels and we rushed into the kitchen where Great-Aunt stood at the stove cooking something.

“Oh, Great-Aunt! I have killed a sheep with a potato!”

If I live a hundred years, I shall never forget how Great-Aunt looked as she turned towards me.

“There! Didn’t I know it would be so?” Words came at last. “Trouble-maker that you are! Why in the world did you come here? Children should stay at home, I think —”

I heard no more, for I ran out—ran I did not know where, but at last I found myself sitting in a dark corner of the barn behind the hay-cutter.

O dear! O dear! How horrid it was! I should never be happy again, never, never! Why did we have to come here this Christmas? Why did the sheep get the potato in its throat? I meant to give them all a treat. And now Uncle and Aunt Magda would be furiously angry with me, and perhaps Father and Mother would be too. I cried and sobbed as if my heart would break.

How long I sat there I do not know, but it must have been for hours. I heard them call me many times, but I kept still; the thought of seeing any one was unbearable.

Little by little my crying stopped and I began to follow a new train of thought. I would stay in this corner all my life—yes, and starve to death—perhaps steal out at night and get a little food—but no one should know that I lay in hiding here; and when many years later they found me behind the hay-cutter, lying dead with a tear-stained face—then horrid Great-Aunt would be sorry enough.

Suddenly I heard Aunt Magda's voice right near me.

“Oh, my dear, blessed child! Are you lying here? We've been looking everywhere for you.”

“Are you very angry about the sheep, Auntie?”

“Oh, far from it! You didn't mean to do any harm. Great-Aunt is very hasty, you know.”

“And Uncle?”

“Oh, Uncle will understand,” said Aunt Magda, comfortingly. “And now, my jewel, don’t think of it any more.”

Oh, how I loved Aunt Magda! How unspeakably, unspeakably! The whole afternoon I sat close beside her or followed her about. I would not leave her for an instant.

At last the day came for us to go home, traveling this time by the steamer.

Great-Aunt gave us a big package of fig-cakes and raisins and almonds, and when we said good-bye, she patted us on the shoulder and asked us to come again soon. So she wasn’t so bad, after all!

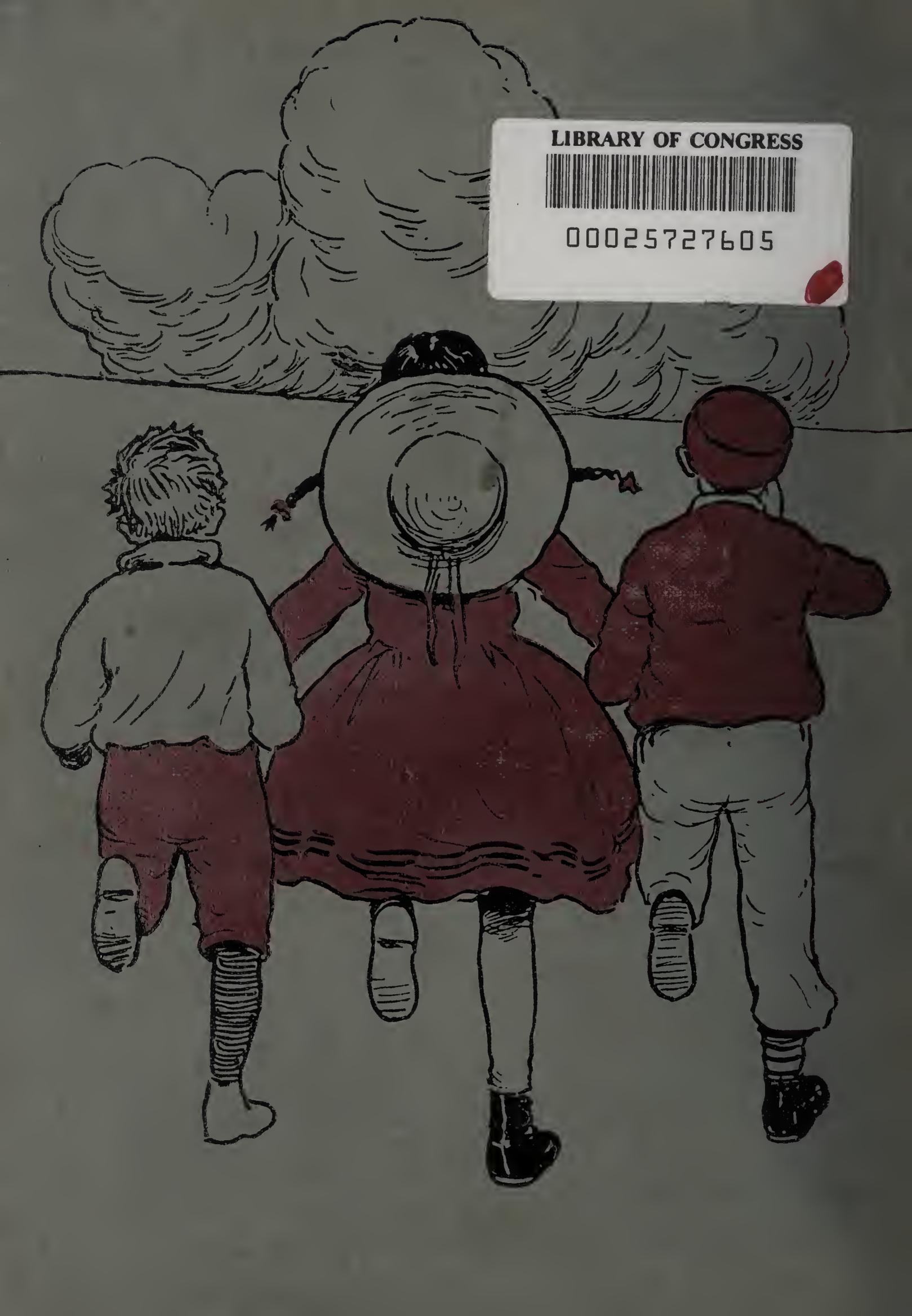
When the steamer reached our town, Karsten and I were the first on the wharf. We leaped up the hill to our home in just about one bound, and up the steps. We hadn’t time to shut the doors after us, but left them standing open all the way to Mother’s room. There

sat Mother in an easy-chair, reaching out her arms to us.

“Oh, Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!”
And Mother took us in her arms, pressing us close to her breast.

“Oh, my dear, dear children!”

There is nothing in the world so delightful as to come home.



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